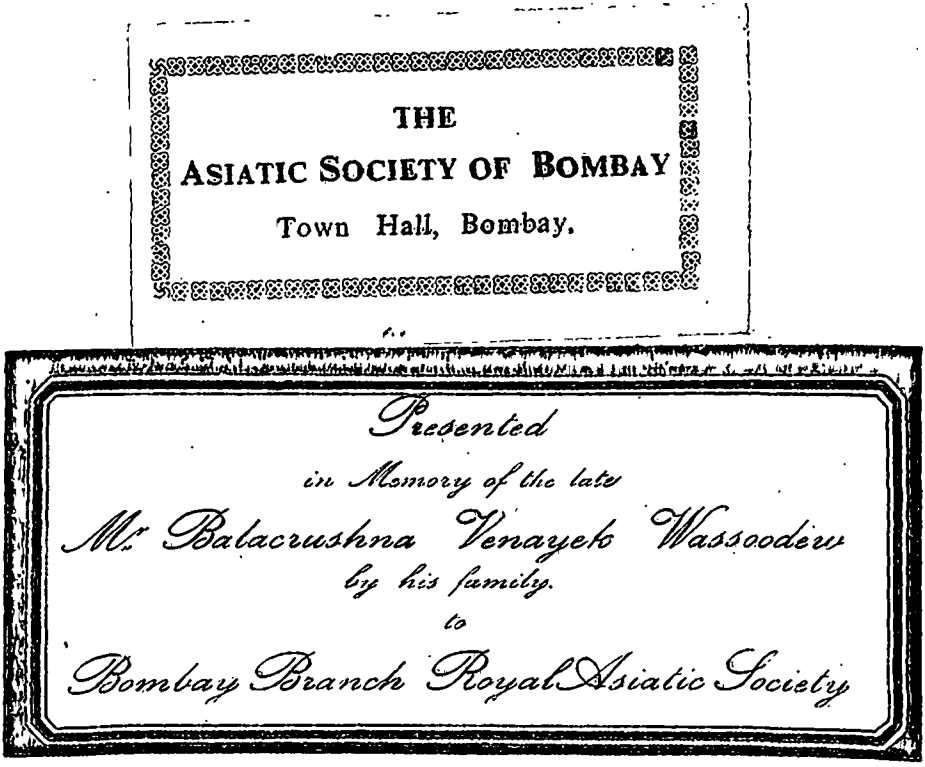

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AN

HISTORICAL VIEW

OF THE

ENGLISH GOVERNMENT,

FROM THE

SETTLEMENT OF THE SAXONS IN BRITAIN

TO

THE REVOLUTION IN 1688.

TO WHICH ARE SUBJOINED,

SOME DISSERTATIONS CONNECTED WITH THE HISTORY OF THE GOVERNMENT,

FROM THE REVOLUTION TO THE PRESENT TIME.

BY

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IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. MAWMAN, NO. 39, LUDGATE STREET.

1812.

9412
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19291
25 SEP 1964

Presented
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by his family.
to
Bombay Branch Royal Asiatic Society

J. G. BERNARD, PRINTER, SKINNER STREET, LONDON.

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AN

HISTORICAL VIEW

OF THE

ENGLISH GOVERNMENT.

DISSERTATIONS CONNECTED WITH THE HISTORY OF THE GOVERNMENT FROM THE REVOLUTION TO THE PRESENT TIME.

ESSAY I.

Review of the Government of Ireland.

THE connection between England and Ireland, which has now subsisted for many centuries, is a circumstance of great importance in the history of these two countries, and cannot, with propriety, be overlooked in a political survey of Great Britain.

The first invasion of Ireland by the English proceeded from the rapacity of private adventurers; and had no other object but

the acquisition of possessions in that country. Though Henry II. under whom the first English settlement was made, claimed the whole island as an accession to his crown, and though he had been at the pains to procure a Papal bull, as a foundation for that claim, he appears to have done very little, either to ascertain and extend the conquest, or to civilize the inhabitants, and reduce them under a regular government. The subsequent monarchs of England were equally inattentive to those objects, or from peculiar embarrassments at home, were incapable of pursuing them; so that the private settlers, in that hitherto rude country, were left, by their own efforts, to maintain their possessions, and to guard against the attacks of the natives. In such a situation it could not be expected that these two sets of people would live in good neighbourhood. The English were, in reality, a band of robbers, who had stripped the natives of a part of their property; and by means of recruits from England, were endeavouring to avail themselves of every opportunity of seizing on the whole. As the avowed purpose of

the former was to invade and plunder, so the provocation, suffered by the latter, must have united them, not only to defend their possessions, but to revenge the injuries they had sustained; and considering the uncultivated state of the one people, with the barbarous ferocity of the other, it is not surprising, that by a long course of mutual depredation, they contracted a bitter and rancorous animosity and hatred, and often conducted their hostilities in a manner equally inconsistent with the faith of treaties, and with the feelings of humanity.

The old and the new inhabitants were thus prevented from incorporating; and a line of separation between them was drawn by their mutual contention and hostile passions. The latter were called the Irish *within the pale*: the former the Irish *without the pale*. The Irish within the pale were accounted subjects of the crown of England; and entitled to receive such protection from the sovereign, as could conveniently be afforded them. The English government considered those without the

pale as aliens, from whom it indeed endeavoured to raise a tribute, but whom, in place of protecting, it never failed to treat as enemies, whenever disputes arose between them and the other inhabitants.

The Irish within the pale, from their primitive connection with England, as well as from the influence and authority of her monarchs, fell under a government similar, in every respect, to that of the mother country. They composed, in one view, a sort of English province, over which the sovereign claimed an executive power, and appointed, during pleasure, a governor. These appointments were begun by Henry II. and continued by his successors. The country was divided into districts, and committed to the care of sheriffs. Superior courts of justice were likewise formed, upon the same plan with those at Westminster-hall.

As the Irish inhabitants of the pale, however, were left, in a great measure, to struggle with the natives, and to follow such measures, for their safety and prosperity, as

were suggested by their peculiar circumstances, they required a great council to deliberate upon their affairs, and to regulate the conduct of their executive officers. For this purpose an assembly, after the example of the English parliament, was occasionally convened by the governor; but at what period this establishment was completed is uncertain. Sir John Davies thinks it had no place till the reign of Edward II. about an hundred and *forty* years after the first settlement; but the opinion of Leland is more probable, that its commencement reaches as high as the reign of Henry I. though it was much later before the institution attained a regular form.

The Irish parliament was early composed of two houses, as in England: the Lords temporal and spiritual having a seat in the one; and the knights of shires, and burgesses, in the other: but for a long time the assembly was far from being numerous. Before the reign of Henry VIII. there were but twelve counties, besides the liberty of Tipperary, and thirty-four boroughs; so

that the numbers of the house of commons could not amount to an hundred*.

As this national assembly was called for the same purposes with that of England, it was wont to deliberate upon the same sort of business, and to exercise similar powers. Its interpositions having arisen from a total neglect, or inability, of the English parliament to regulate the government of Ireland, the members of that assembly appear to have early considered themselves, not as acting in any subordinate capacity, but as possessed of an independent authority. In conformity to this idea, we find the states of Ireland as far back as the reign of Edward III. asserting their privilege, according to the ancient custom of holding their own parliaments, and their exemption from the burden of electing and sending any persons to the parliaments, or councils held in England†.

* See Sir John Davies's speech to the House of Commons, in 1613.

† See the curious record, entitled Memoranda de Hibernia Veriment, referred to by Dr. Leland, and published in the Calendar of Ancient Charters.

With respect to the native Irish, or to the inhabitants *without the pale*, they seem to be considered, by many writers, as disgraced by a greater portion of barbarity and ferocity, than the rude inhabitants of other countries. But for this opinion it is difficult to discover any real foundation. By their long continued quarrels and hostilities with the English invaders, they became doubtless, inured to bloodshed, and instead of making progress in refinements and the arts, were confirmed in all the vices natural to a people unacquainted with civility and regular government. It must at the same time be acknowledged, that, from the partiality and prejudices of English historians, those vices have been greatly exaggerated.

Before the reign of Henry II. Ireland had been less exposed to foreign invasion than most other European countries; and though the inhabitants had never attained that civilization, which the ancient Romans communicated to their conquered provinces, they had comparatively, for some centuries, enjoyed a degree of tranquillity, which was likely to become the source of improvement.

It appears, accordingly, that under the cloud of thick darkness, which hung over Europe in the seventh century, some faint rays of light were discovered in Ireland, where, under the protection of the Christian clergy, a number of schools had been established, and were then in a flourishing condition. We are informed by an historian, of no less authority than Bede, that, about this period, it was usual for persons of distinction, among the Anglo-Saxons, and from the continent of Europe, to retire to that island for the purposes of enjoying the comforts of a sequestered life, and for obtaining the benefit of religious instruction from the Irish clergy, who, at that time, it seems, were distinguished for the purity of their doctrines, and for the strictness of their discipline.

The customs which antiquaries and historians have pointed out and collected, as peculiar to the Irish, are such as indicate no uncommon degree of barbarism and ferocity; but, on the contrary, when compared with those of other nations, exhibit that striking resemblance of lineaments and features, which may be remarked [illegible] habitants of every

country before the advancement of arts and civilization.

The people were divided into *septs*, or tribes, in a great measure independent of one another. Each of these was under a chief, who conducted the members of his tribe in war, and who endeavoured to protect them, either from the attacks of their neighbours, or from the various acts of injustice arising among themselves. In this latter capacity, the chief, agreeably to the general practice of rude nations, committed the administration of justice to a deputy, who received the appellation of Brehon. The Brehons were the ordinary judges in all those parts of the country, where the authority of the English monarch, in judicial matters, had not been established. Their jurisdiction was of a similar nature, and origin, to that of the *Stewarts*, whom, in the countries under the feudal system, the barons authorised to distribute justice among their tenants and vassals.

Many different *septs*, inhabiting an extensive territory were frequently associated under a common leader, whose authority

over this larger division, though much inferior to that of each inferior chief over his own sept, was gradually, by length of time, as well as by occasional circumstances, confirmed and extended. By the confederation of smaller into larger societies, there had arisen five large provinces, into which the whole island was divided. Mention is even made by historians, that these provinces had been occasionally united under a king; but this union was probably so transient and slight as never to have bestowed much real influence upon the nominal sovereign.

The appropriation of land, that great step in the progress of agriculture, appears, among the ancient inhabitants of Ireland, not to have taken place universally, for long after the English invasion, they retained so much of the pastoral manners, as, without confining themselves to fixed residence, to wander, with their cattle, from place to place. This custom known by the name of *booleying*, suppose that large commons, or tracts of unappropriated land, were extended through all the divisions of the country; and that the waste grounds bore a great pro-

portion to those, which were employed in tillage. In all countries the acquisition of landed property has arisen from agriculture; for the cultivators of a particular spot became entitled to the immediate produce, as the fruit and reward of their labour; and, after a long course of cultivation, having meliorated the soil, were, upon the same principle, entitled to the future possession of the land itself, by which alone they could reap the advantages derived from their past improvements. Those lands, therefore, in Ireland, which had been employed solely in pasturage, must have remained in an unappropriated state, open to the promiscuous use of the whole community.

The limited and imperfect state of the appropriation of land in Ireland, may be further illustrated from the Irish customs with relation to succession. It appears that property in land was vested in the chiefs only, or leaders of *septs*; and that the inferior people of the tribe were merely tenants at will. The estates of those chiefs, however, were not transmitted from father to son by hereditary descent, but, upon the death

of the proprietor, passed to the eldest of his male relations. This person, by his experience in war, having usually acquired the highest reputation for military skill, was the best qualified to be leader of the tribe, and the most capable of defending that estate, in which they had all a common concern. This is the custom, anciently distinguished, both in Ireland and in Scotland, by the name of *Tanistry*; a name said to be derived from the circumstance, that, in the life time of the predecessor, it was common to ascertain and acknowledge the right of his heir, who, in the Celtic language, received the appellation of the *Tanist*, that is, the second person in the tribe. Traces of this mode of succession are very universally to be found in the early history of mankind. In that situation where the inhabitants of a country are almost continually engaged in predatory expeditions, it may be expedient that the land, possessed by those little societies of kindred, who reside in the same neighbourhood, should remain undivided under the disposal of the chief; and that, in chusing this leader, more regard should be had to

his age, experience, and military qualities; than to his blood-relation with the person who formerly enjoyed that office. The plan of transmitting inheritances, by which children, and even families, in a state of infancy, succeed to estates according to such rules, as are suggested by the inclination of parents, can hardly be made effectual till mankind enjoy a degree of tranquillity, and are, without any exertion of their own, protected by the public, and secured from depredation. The establishment of such a plan therefore, supposes considerable advances in the social intercourse, and a degree of improvement in many of the arts of life.

The inferior tenants, or followers of the chief, appear to have held their lands during his pleasure; though probably these tenants were usually permitted to remain in possession during life; and upon their decease, their estates were divided among the eldest males of the *sept**. This has improperly

* See Davies's Discovery, 1747. p. 169.

been called, by some writers, succession by *gavel-kind.*

In that simple age when landed property is, in some measure, retained in common by a whole tribe, there naturally subsists an intimate connection, and strong attachment among the members of that small society. They live much together, are separated from the rest of the world, and assist one another in all their important transactions. Their affections are strengthened by the habits of intimacy, and by their mutual exertions of kindness in promoting their common interest. The chief is commonly attended by a number of his kindred, and tenants, whom he entertains with rustic hospitality and magnificence, as in return, they are ambitious of displaying their attachment, and their own importance, by entertaining their leader. The custom of visiting his tenants, and of his being maintained, on those occasions, at their expence, to which historians have given the appellation of *coshering*, was probably supported likewise by political considerations; as by making frequent progresses through the territories

of his tribe, the chief of the *sept* was enabled to prevent disturbance among a disorderly people, and according to the demerits of his tenants to proportion the burden of his maintenance.

The members of every sept were not only subject to the burden of maintaining their chief, when he thought proper to visit them, but were also liable to contributions for defraying the expence of his maintenance when he was employed in defence of the community. Hence a foundation was laid for arbitrary exactions, distinguished by the names of *coegite* and *livery*, which were originally Irish, but were afterwards adopted by the English settlers, and became the source of great oppression.

The mutual attachment and confidence that subsisted between the chief and the members of his tribe, are most especially remarkable in the practice of what is called *fostering*. It was common for the chief to give out his children, not only to be suckled, but even to be brought up, in the family of some of his tenants. To maintain such children was not looked upon as a burden;

but as a mark of distinction; it created a new species of relation with the leader of the tribe; and enabled such fosterers to acquire a peculiar interest in those persons, whom the whole society beheld with admiration and respect. The practice, at the same time, shews the general simplicity of manners, which had introduced no idea that the son of a chief required an education superior to what might be obtained in the house of his tenants.

With regard to the laws enforced by the Brehons in the distribution of justice, they were similar to those of the other early European nations. The weakness of government, in rude states, by disabling the injured party from procuring an adequate punishment, has generally produced a pecuniary compensation even for the most atrocious offences, and the same interested motives, which determined the private sufferer to accept of such compositions, have also rendered them agreeable to the public magistrate, who, on the part of the community, levied the fines drawn on those occasions. Such pecuniary punishments are said to have

been inflicted by the Brehons for murder, and for the greater part of crimes.

I had formerly occasion to notice that remarkable institution which took place in Ireland, by which the head of every sept was responsible for the conduct of all his followers, in the same manner as in England, a tything man might be called to account for the offences of every member of his tything. It has been supposed, that this law was copied from the English by the inhabitants of Ireland, but, in all probability, it proceeded independent of imitation, from the similarity of circumstances in both countries; and, in reality, it seems agreeable to the notions of justice and expediency suggested by a state of rudeness and barbarism. The estate under the management of a chief, belongs, in some measure, to the whole tribe, and when any member of that society commits a crime, to be expiated by a pecuniary composition, it is not inconsistent with justice, that this penalty should be paid out of the common funds, by the person who represents the community. It is, at the same time, highly expedient, that those who

suffer by the injustice of any obscure member of a tribe, should not be under the necessity of prosecuting the particular offenders, but should obtain redress from the person known and distinguished as the head of the community, who could be at no loss to discover the guilty persons, and procure from them an indemnity.

From the reign of Henry II. to the accession of the house of Tudor, the interpositions of the English crown, in the government of Ireland, were feeble and transitory; extending commonly little farther than to the nomination of the chief executive officers. The distresses of King John, and of Henry III.; the schemes of Edward I. for the conquest of Scotland, and for the annexation of that kingdom to his English dominions; the wars carried on by the subsequent princes in France; with the great expence, and the numerous embarassments of which those imprudent measures were productive; and lastly, the long contention between the rival houses of York and Lancaster, by which England itself became a field of blood, and a continued scene of

anarchy and confusion; all this train of vexation, enterprize, disappointment, and disaster, prevented the English monarchs from supporting their authority in Ireland, or taking any vigorous measures for the reduction of that country*.

As the primitive settlers from England derived little or no assistance from the government, they were, on the other hand, subject to no limitation with respect to the extent of their acquisitions. They found no difficulty in obtaining grants of those lands of which they had seized the possession, and even of such territories beyond the pale, as they had formed the project of acquiring. Immense donations were thus

* So little were the Irish apprehensive of incurring the displeasure of England, that when Richard, Duke of York, with his followers, had been declared rebels, and attainted by the English parliament, they were treated in Ireland with the utmost hospitality; by an express act of parliament, they were taken under the public protection; and some of them being attached, in consequence of the English attainder, the person, who had ventured to execute the king's writ, was condemned and put to death. The same parliament afterwards declared, that Ireland is governed by its own legislature only; and that the inhabitants of that country are not subject to the jurisdiction of any foreign tribunal.—*See Leland's History of Ireland.*

nominally made to a few individuals, insomuch, that while in reality no more than a third part was in possession of the English, the whole kingdom is said to have been parcelled among ten proprietors. Nothing could be more adverse to the cultivation of the country, and the civilization of the inhabitants, than this prodigious extent of property bestowed upon those who had already the chief power in their hands. These great lords not only were incapable of managing the vast estates already in their possession, but were interested to prevent the remainder from being given either to the native Irish, or to such new English planters as might be willing to improve it. In consequence of these grants there came to be in Ireland, at one time, no less than eight counties palatine, each of which was governed by a sort of independent sovereign*.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, many desperate English adventurers, at different times, obtained from the crown particular grants of territories beyond the pale, and endeavoured to maintain by force what they had occupied under the colour of a legal

* See Sir John Davies's Discovery.

sanction. The families of these people, after a long course of war and rapine, degenerated by degrees from the English customs, and by mutual intercourse, were at length so incorporated with their neighbours as to be no longer distinguishable, by any marks of greater civilization. Upon the whole it is observable, that the native Irish, by their power and by their numbers, had more influence in changing the manners of the new inhabitants than the latter, in communicating their improvements to the former; and that the people of English race, whether within or without the pale, were in the course of some centuries, apparently declining to a state of rudeness and barbarism.

The accession of Henry VII. as it restored peace and tranquillity to England, so it enabled the sovereign to plan and execute more effectual measures for the administration of his Irish dominions. It produced, at the same time, an exaltation of the prerogative, the effect of which was distinctly felt in both countries. In Ireland, two objects appear to have been immediately in the view of the crown; to extend a regular police over the country; and to render the

Irish government subordinate to that of England.

To promote the former of these purposes, under the direction of Sir Edward Poynings, the lord-deputy, it was provided by an act of the Irish parliament, that all the statutes lately made in England, of a public nature, should be held effectual and valid in Ireland. An extensive improvement was thus introduced at once into the latter country, by assimilating its political system to that of England. It has been justly observed, however, by a late historian, that this adoption of English laws, by the Irish parliament, was not unprecedented, and that in particular, another instance of it occurs in the reign of Edward IV. though it is highly probable that it had proved ineffectual. It has, at the same time, been erroneously supposed by some writers, that this act extended to the whole code of English statutes; whereas, in reality, it refers only to a certain number, which, however inaccurately specified, were under the eye of the Irish legislature.

From this regulation, it may fairly be concluded that the Irish parliament was, at this time, understood to possess an indepen-

dent legislative authority. If that assembly was capable of adopting the laws of England, it must have had the power also of rejecting them. And as this act of the legislature sufficiently testifies the exertion of independence upon the part of Ireland, so the assent of the governor, upon the part of the king, leaves no room to doubt of his majesty's approbation and concurrence.

To secure the dependence of the Irish parliament upon the crown, Henry endeavoured to acquire a negative before debate upon all their determinations. For this purpose he procured from that assembly a regulation, that no parliament should be held in Ireland until the lord-deputy and his council should certify to the king and council in England, the causes for which the meeting was to be called, and the bills which were therein to be enacted; and that unless the king's leave were previously obtained, the transactions of any future parliament should be void in law.

The interest of the crown required that all debates in parliament, which might inflame the minds of the people, should be suppressed, and that the king should not be

put to the disagreeable necessity of rejecting a bill, which, by a previous discussion, had become a popular measure. Even in England such discussions were often attended with troublesome consequences; and they were likely to be more so in Ireland, where from the distance of the sovereign, his private influence could not be so speedily exerted.

In the reign of Queen Mary an extension was made of this law, by requiring that not only the acts in contemplation at the calling of parliament, but those also which might be proposed after the meeting of that assembly, should, in like manner, be certified to the king and council in England, and previously to their becoming the subject of deliberation should obtain the royal approbation.

From the progress of an independent spirit at a later period, an expedient for avoiding this law was easily suggested. Though parliament, without the concurrence of the sovereign, could not introduce a bill for a new law, it was thought they were not restrained from deliberating in any case,

whether a proposal for such a bill should be certified to the king and council; and, in this view, under the colour of heads of a bill to be proposed in future, every argument that could be advanced in supporting or in opposing the bill itself, might be introduced and considered. By such a preliminary debate, the public attention to the measure proposed might be excited no less effectually, and their opinions and sentiments with regard to it might be discovered no less clearly, than if the bill, after undergoing all the necessary ceremonials, had been regularly presented to the two houses for their determination.

The religious reformation in the reign of Henry VIII. became the source of new animosities in Ireland, more bitter and rancorous than those which had formerly subsisted. In that country, literature had made too little progress to create a spirit of liberty in matters of religion, and disposition to pull down that edifice, which, in a course of ages, had been reared by ignorance and superstition. The people content to be guided implicitly by their religious teachers, had no disposition to pry into mysteries, or to

call in question the ceremonies and observances which a designing priesthood had established among their forefathers. Warmly attached to the ancient system of religion, they were taught to believe that nothing could be more meritorious than to hazard their lives in its defence. The political circumstances at the same time, which, in some other parts of Europe, had begun to promote the freedom and independence of the great body of the people, had hitherto no place in Ireland. Arts and manufactures had not there made such progress as to produce a degree of luxury, and to multiply tradesmen and artificers. Men of great property had not, by an increase in the expence of living, been induced to discard their idle retainers, and with a view of obtaining an advancement of rent, to grant long leases to their tenants. The peasantry were still absolutely dependent upon their masters; the members of every great family, or sept, were invariably attached to their chief. The great wealth in the possession of churchmen, by which, like the temporal lords, they were enabled to maintain a number of dependents, was not squandered in procur-

ing luxuries, but expended, the greater part of it, in acts of hospitality and charity, which commanded universal respect and veneration. Their jurisdiction and authority, as barons, not having as yet suffered any diminution, continued to operate in addition to the influence arising from the reputed piety of their lives, the sacred functions committed to them, and their situation as members of that great system of ecclesiastical power, which the Roman pontiff had established. Thus, in Ireland, the religious reformation might be regarded as an exotic, for which the soil, at that time, was totally unprepared, and which could only be raised by artificial and violent means. If, by the utmost care and culture, it had been made to take root, there was reason to fear that, when left to itself, it would immediately decay, and be overgrown and choked up by the native weeds of the country.

The authority, and the violent temper of Henry VIII. were indeed successful in procuring, from the Irish parliament, a renunciation of the papal jurisdiction, an acknowledgment of the King's supremacy, and the

suppression of religious houses. But, notwithstanding these compliances with the humour of the king, the people in general, and even a great proportion of both houses of parliament, were zealously attached to the ancient faith. These Roman Catholics, it may easily be supposed, were highly enraged at the late innovations, dissatisfied with every measure of a government so hostile to their religion, and ready to embrace every opportunity of creating disturbances. The emissaries of Rome, in the mean time, were not idle, and spared no pains to cherish and inflame these dispositions. To the inhabitants of English race, it was observed, that their title to settle in the country, was entirely founded upon a donation from the pope. To sooth the vanity, and to excite the superstitious and bigoted zeal of the native Irish, this was represented as the favourite island of his holiness; the peculiar seat of the pure catholic religion, upon the fidelity and steadiness of which, according to ancient prophecies, depended the glory and prosperity of the Christian church. That the enemies of the late innovations, however numerous

and hostile to each other, might act in concert, the agents of Rome maintained a regular correspondence with the different *septs*, opened a channel of communication through the remotest parts of the country, and exhorted the leading people to lay aside their private jealousies, and to unite in one great cause, the defence of their common religion.

These dispositions of the Irish gave rise to various combinations and attempts against the government, which, according to circumstances, were more or less formidable; but were uniformly succeeded by forfeitures, calculated to gratify the friends and connections of the ruling party. The reign of Elizabeth produced in Ireland no less than three rebellions; which might be attributed almost entirely to the state of religious differences. The first was excited by John O'Neale, chief of the powerful tribe of that name, who exercised a sort of sovereign power in Ulster. This rebellion was suppressed by the vigour and dexterity of Sir Henry Sidney, the lord-deputy; and, though it occasioned a public declaration of many forfeitures, these were not carried

into execution, but suffered to fall into oblivion. Another insurrection, soon after, was produced in the southern part of the island, by the Earl of Desmond, the head of the great family of Fitz-Gerald, a nobleman, whose ancestors had long possessed an authority too great for a subject. The King of Spain, thinking this a proper opportunity for retaliating the assistance given by Queen Elizabeth to his rebellious subjects in the Netherlands, sent a military force to act in concert with the Irish insurgents; but, fortunately, the abilities of Desmond were not equal to such an undertaking, and, after a series of miscarriages, he was deserted by his followers, and lost his life, without the credit of distinguishing himself by any brilliant action. The suppression of this rebellion was attended with forfeitures to a great extent, and drew from England a large colony to settle in Munster. Estates were offered to the settlers at the small rent of three-pence, and, in some cases, of two-pence the acre; each purchaser being bound to plant a certain number of families within his domain. Sir Walter

Raleigh, Sir Christopher Hatton, and many other persons of distinction, obtained grants of estates upon such terms; but, though they occupied the lands, they were not very scrupulous in fulfilling the conditions.

The last rebellion in this reign, and by far the most formidable, was that conducted by Hugh, another branch of the family of O'Neale, who, together with the chief-ship, had now obtained his father's title, that of Earl of Tirone. This leader, in abilities and education, was much superior to the other chiefs of the mere Irish. He had served in the English army; and, as he had become acquainted with the customs of the English, was equally capable of recommending himself to them, and to his own countrymen, by assuming occasionally the manners and deportment of either. With an insinuating address, joined to the most profound dissimulation, he gained the confidence of the English governors, and even of the Queen herself; while, by secret practices, he inflamed the discontents of his countrymen, and prepared them for an insurrection. Even, after he had recourse to

arms, he, by various excuses, by affected complaints of injustice, and by repeated pretences of submission, found means to amuse the government, and to procure the delays necessary for bringing his plans to maturity. The King of Spain sent once more a body of troops to support the rebels; which gave such encouragement to the mal-contents, as to render the insurrection almost universal. An army of twenty thousand men from England was thought necessary to support the government; and even over this force the rebels gained many advantages. At length, however, by the activity and judicious conduct of Lord Mountjoy, the governor, their force was broken, and they were completely defeated. Tirone submitted at a very critical period, when the death of Elizabeth was known to the Irish administration, but was still kept a secret from the rest of the inhabitants. Thus the prosperous reign of that princess was terminated by an event of the utmost importance to her subjects, the restoration of peace and tranquillity of Ireland, and the establishment, over all her dominions, of a

degree of religious liberty, to which, for many centuries, they had been altogether strangers.

The accession of James I. produced an era no less remarkable, in the history of Ireland, than in that of England and Scotland. By the union of the English and Scottish crowns, by the cordial acquiescence of the whole nation in the title of their new sovereign, and, above all, by the entire subjection of the Irish chiefs in the late reign, James found himself in a better condition than any of his predecessors, for communicating the English jurisprudence to Ireland, and for extending the advantages of regular government and civilized manners to that hitherto uncultivated and intractable part of his dominions.

The first step, in the course of these improvements, was to reduce the whole country under tribunals modelled upon the English plan. The authority of the Brehons had still continued in force, in most parts of the kingdom; and their decisions, as might be expected, were agreeable to the ancient Irish customs. To these judges,

and to their peculiar forms of procedure, the people were zealously attached, and every attempt to overturn this early institution was treated as a dangerous innovation. So late as the reign of Elizabeth, when Fitz-William, the governor, informed Mac-Guire, the chieftain of Fermanagh, that he intended to send a sheriff into his territories, the chief replied, without hesitation, "Your sheriff shall be welcome, but "let me know his *erie*, that, if my people "should cut off his head, I may levy it upon "the country." The whole country was now divided into thirty-two counties, which were put under the superintendence of sheriffs, and subjected to the jurisdiction of itinerant courts. By this reformation, people of the lower ranks were protected from those numerous exactions, which their superiors had formerly imposed upon them, and began to taste, in some measure, the blessings of security and freedom. The inhabitants were thus comforted for the loss of their barbarous usages, by the evident advantages resulting from the new regulations; and if they were denied the privilege of plunder-

ing their neighbours, had, in return, the satisfaction of being less exposed to theft and robbery, or to personal injury. The change at first, was possibly not relished; but it could not fail in time to become palatable. It resembled the transition from poverty to riches; from hunger and hard fare, to plenty and delicacy.

Another great object, essential to the future tranquillity of Ireland, was the settlement of landed property. From the frequency of rebellions and disorders many forfeitures had occurred; and the same estates had passed through a number of different families. In such a situation, there came to be much room for dispute, concerning the property of estates; while, in some cases, the validity of the forfeitures was called in question; in some, the pretended grants from the crown were liable to challenge; and, in others, the right of the present possessor was confirmed by such a length of time, as might appear to supply the defects of the original titles. For putting an end to the numberless controversies that might arise in such cases, certain com-

missioners were appointed by the crown to examine defective titles of such persons as held lands by the English forms; and the possessors were invited to surrender their estates into the hands of the governor, in order to obtain a new and more legal grant. The governor was likewise empowered to accept surrenders from those Irish lords, who held their estates by the ancient precarious tenure usual in Ireland, and, under certain precautions and regulations, to reinvest the possessor according to the common law of England, with a full and complete right of property. Care was taken, at the same time, to limit the new grants to the actual possessions of the claimants; as also to secure the inferior tenants, and to convert their former uncertain services and duties into a fixed pecuniary payment. The old custom of *tanistry* was thus abolished, and, according to the new grants, estates became universally transmissible to heirs.

A regulation, somewhat similar to this, had been attempted, by an act of parliament in the reign of Elizabeth; but, from the circumstances of the nation at that period,

it could not be made effectual *. The extensive disposal of property, which it now occasioned, and the proportional influence, which it bestowed upon the crown, may easily be conceived. The determination of the commissioners could so little be subjected to any general rules, that every person must have considered himself as indebted to government, for the estate, which he was allowed to obtain or to preserve, and felt himself under the necessity of yielding an implicit submission to such terms as the executive power thought proper to demand.

In this state of the country, Tirone, and his principal adherents, who had formerly submitted to government, were alarmed by the suspicion of some new insurrection, and fled to the Continent; upon which their immense possessions were confiscated. There fell thus into the hands of the crown an extent of territory, in the six northern counties, amounting to about 500,000 acres, in the settlement of which more moderate portions were assigned to individuals, and

more effectual precautions were taken to avoid abuses, than had occurred on former occasions.

The city of London became undertakers in this new settlement, and obtained large grants in the county of Derry. Upon pretence of protecting this infant plantation, though, in reality, with a view of raising money, the King instituted the order of Irish baronets, or knights of Ulster, from each of whom, as was then done in Scotland with respect to the knights of *Nova Scotia*, he exacted a certain sum, in consideration of the dignity to be conferred.

The regulations for the security of landed possessions, introduced at this period, and those for the extension of law and regular government, were followed, in Ireland, by the enjoyment of peace and tranquillity for near forty years, during which, considerable advances were made in agriculture and even in manufactures. In the reign of Charles I. the vigorous, though somewhat oppressive, administration of Sir Thomas Wentworth, contributed much to the progress of these improvements. By his imme-

diate encouragement, and even by his example, the linen manufacture was introduced, and has ever since, though with some interruptions, continued in a state of advancement.

The great object of this able but iniquitous governor, was the improvement of the revenue. As the forfeiture of Desmond had given rise to an extensive English settlement in the southern, and that of Tirone and his adherents in the northern part of Ireland, it was now thought expedient that a similar plantation should be effected in Connaught. For this purpose, the validity of titles to estates, in that part of the island, was called in question; various objections to the right of many individuals were started; and these being referred to the commissioners appointed for the trial of such cases, were very generally sustained. Where the juries employed in trying the facts shewed reluctance, recourse was had to promises, threats, and even to sevère punishments, for procuring a verdict in favour of the crown. The arbitrary and tyrannical measures of the governor, on these occasions, were car-

ried to such a pitch, as excited the highest indignation; but, at the same time, they were prosecuted with such impetuosity and steadiness as bore down all opposition, and, in the counties of this western division, brought an extensive territory under the disposal of government.

In the disputes between Charles I. and his people, the Irish parliament took party with the latter, and entered into similar measures with those pursued in England, for preventing the arbitrary exertions of prerogative. In the year 1640, the commons in Ireland refused the subsidies demanded by government, objected to the modes of taxation hitherto practised, and presented to the lord-deputy a remonstrance, complaining of grievances.

Although the inhabitants of Ireland had not, at this period, carried their improvements in trade and manufactures to such a height, as could raise the great body of the people to the same condition of independence as in England, yet the planters of English race, those adventurers, who, by the favour of government, had obtained

estates in Ireland, and had been willing to encounter the hazards of settling in that country, amid the rage and resentment of the former possessors, were, in general, we may suppose, men of a bold spirit and of independent principles. These were the people, who, by their opulence, and by their powerful connections in England, possessed the chief influence over the determinations of the Irish legislature; and who, as they had caught the enthusiastic love of freedom, which now pervaded the English nation, were chiefly instrumental in diffusing the same sentiments through the sister kingdom.

The same difference of opinion in religious matters, which had arisen in England, and in Scotland, found their way also into Ireland, and contributed to influence their political sentiments. Among those of the protestant persuasion, the two great sects of Presbyterians and Independents, whom their adversaries distinguished by the contemptuous appellation of Puritans, and of whom, the latter rejected all ecclesiastical authority, the former, all subordination of

ranks among churchmen, formed a natural alliance with the friends of civil freedom; and their tenets in religion were even adopted by a great part of those individuals, who obtained an ascendency in parliament.

On the other hand, the supporters of the hierarchy, the Roman Catholics, and the members of the established church, who, though differing in many religious tenets, agreed in their ardent zeal for promoting the power of churchmen, and for placing the management and controul of that power in the hands of a single person; all these, by the tenor of their ecclesiastical system, were hostile to the designs of parliament, and willing to exalt the prerogative. As the King could not fail to discover these dispositions, which prevailed among the different classes of the people, he could hardly avoid shewing favour to such as were subservient to his views; and, in particular, affording protection and relief to the Roman Catholics from the hardships of those penal statutes, to which, by their non-conformity, they were exposed. This partiality naturally became the source of jealousy and

disgust in the one party, of gratitude and attachment in the other.

* Such, in both countries, was the state of the two great political parties; but, in Ireland, there was better ground than in England for entertaining an apprehension and jealousy of the Roman Catholics, as, compared with them, the Protestants, though, in some degree, masters of the government, were no more than a handful of people. Their distance from the chief seat of the executive power, and the subor-

* It was the object of Charles to remove, by degrees, the differences that subsisted between the system of the established church and that of the Roman Catholics, and to bestow upon the former that authority, and that influence over the people, which were enjoyed by the latter. For this purpose, with the advice and assistance of Laud, he had introduced in England a new set of ecclesiastical canons, intended to new-model the discipline of the church; and a new liturgy, calculated, by a number of external ceremonies, to impress the multitude with superstitious awe and veneration, and to produce a blind submission to their spiritual guides. The same innovations were extended to Ireland, with a few variations accommodated to the circumstances of the country; and, to render the King absolute in ecclesiastical matters, the convocation was armed with the same powers as in England.

dinate authority possessed by a lord-deputy, rendered, at the same time, the prevailing party in parliament, less capable of enforcing their determinations, or of keeping their enemies in subjection.

While the popish recusants in Ireland, were so formidable by their numbers, they were highly provoked and irritated against the ruling party. Many of them had been unjustly deprived of their possessions, to make way for the needy favourites of administration; and even those, who had been allowed to retain their estates, were, in return, subjected to such regulations and conditions, as curtailed their ancient privileges, and rendered them dependent upon government. For continuing to profess the religion of their forefathers, they were exposed to endless persecution, and reduced under the dominion of heretics, whom they abhorred, and whose damnable errors they detested. Those hardships they imputed, not to the King, whose disposition to relieve them was abundantly manifest; but to that governing party, in the English and Irish

parliaments, which opposed and frustrated his benevolent purposes.

From such views and circumstances proceeded, soon after, the Irish rebellion, planned by the abilities of Roger Moore, in which the rage of disappointed bigotry, under the guidance of a senseless barbarian, Sir Phelim O'Neale, perpetrated that horrid massacre so disgraceful to the annals of Ireland. The disorders of England, at that time, were such as to prevent the interference of government for suppressing this alarming insurrection. The chief executive power had been committed to two justices, Borlace and Parsons, men totally destitute of the capacity and firmness requisite in the present emergency. There was no military force to stop the progress of the insurgents; who had leisure to collect their whole strength, and to form a regular association over the whole kingdom. Their clergy held a general synod, in which they framed a variety of acts, and declarations, calculated to unite the whole Roman Catholic interest both at home and abroad. They were joined by the nobility and gentry, in

constituting a permanent national assembly, for the regulation and superintendence of their future concerns.

At the first insurrection, O'Neale pretended, that he was acting by the authority of Charles; and, to gain belief, produced, in writing, an express commission from the King. But the forgery of this deed seems now to be universally admitted. Whether any secret encouragement, however, had been given to this insurrection, by Charles, or by his Queen, a zealous Roman Catholic, it seems more difficult to determine. It is certain, that, in the course of the civil war, the insurgents uniformly professed their intention to support the interest of the crown; and that Charles regarded them as friends, from whom, in his utmost extremity, relief and assistance might be expected. In this view, he employed the Earl of Antrim to raise troops in Ireland; and that nobleman, having taken the oath prescribed by the confederated rebels, procured a body of 3000 men, who were transported into Britain for the King's service. A commission from Charles, at a later period, was

granted to the Earl of Ormond, the lord-deputy, with discretionary powers for entering into a treaty with the Irish rebels; that, in return for the privileges to be bestowed upon them by the crown, they should send into Britain a body of 10,000 troops, to be employed in the royal cause. But that the nature of this transaction might be kept more secret, the King soon after employed the Earl of Glamorgan, a zealous Roman Catholic, to treat with those confederates, promising, upon the word of a king, to ratify and perform whatever terms that nobleman should think proper to grant. The treaty which took place in consequence of this commission, had been concealed with care, and having been discovered, by an unforeseen accident, was found to contain such concessions to the Roman Catholics, as afforded great scandal to the friends of Charles. Glamorgan was accused of having exceeded his powers, and thrown into prison. But an accusation so improbable was not likely to remove the impression, which the public received from the whole circumstances of the transaction.

The reduction of Ireland, by Oliver Cromwell, and the officers whom he employed for that purpose, gave rise to new forfeitures, and to a new distribution of lands among English adventurers. By the arrangements attempted on this occasion, it was in view to separate the English from the Irish proprietors; and to confine the latter to the province of Connaught.

In the reign of Charles II. and of James II. the apparent designs of the Monarch, in favour of the Roman Catholics, continued the old prepossession and prejudices among religious parties, and secured the great body of the Irish in the interest of these two princes. The effect of this attachment was evident, from the difficulty with which the nation was reduced under the government of William III.

When the government had been completely settled after the Revolution in 1688, it was to be expected that Ireland, as well as England, would reap the benefit of political freedom, and that it would experience a rapid advancement in the arts. Its advances, however, since that period, though

certainly very considerable, have been retarded by a variety of circumstances.

1. The inhabitants of Ireland have been more divided by mutual animosity and discord than those of most other countries. From the invasion of Henry II. to near the end of the last century, the natives were subject to continual depredation from the English government, and from those adventurers of the English race, who had such interest with the government, as enabled them, upon various pretences, to dispossess the ancient proprietors, and to seize their estates. The resentment occasioned by these acts of injustice and oppression, the revenge inflicted by the sufferers, whenever they had an opportunity, the remembrance of past injuries upon either side, and the constant apprehension of the future, could not fail to produce a rooted aversion between the two parties, and to excite the bitterest hatred and rancour.

The religious differences, from the time of Henry VIII. became a fresh ground of dissension, a new source of animosities, which flowed in the same channel with the

former. The ruling party in Ireland embraced the doctrines of the reformation. Those, who had little connection with government adhering to the religion of their ancestors, again found themselves, upon this account, oppressed and persecuted, by the same class of people to whom they imputed the loss of their possessions.

As the people, who had thus been subjected to oppression, both in temporal and spiritual matters, were by far the most numerous, they were able to stand their ground, and were always formidable to their adversaries. While the one party were supported by the civil magistrate, the other were superior by their natural strength; whence they maintained a constant struggle, by which their passions were kept awake, and their hopes and fears alternately excited. Their mutual apprehension and distrust, therefore, were too powerful to permit their uniting cordially in any common measures; and their mutual animosity and jealousy rendered them frequently more intent upon distressing and humbling each

other, than on prosecuting any scheme of national improvement.

The attention of the Irish was, in this manner, wholly engrossed by political and religious disputes; and their minds embraced those objects with a degree of ardour and vehemence unknown in other countries. The same ardent spirit, raised by the continual ferment which those interesting objects had excited, was, at the same time, diffused through the whole of their constitution, and gave a peculiar direction to the national character. A temper, ardent and vehement, a disposition open, forward, undesigning, and sincere, little corrected by culture, might be expected to produce incorrectness of thought and expression, with a tendency to such inaccuracies and blunders as proceed from speaking without due consideration, and from attempting to convey a first impression, without a full examination of particulars. After all, the strictures of the English upon the character and manners of their neighbours in Ireland, like all other observations tending to gratify national vanity and prejudice, must be

received with grains of allowance, and, if not restricted to the lower classes of the people, must be acknowledged, at least, more applicable to the inhabitants of the last century, than to those of the present.

2. At the time when Ireland came to be in a condition to push her trade and manufactures, she was checked by the mercantile regulations of the English government.

The mercantile system of all nations has been built upon the narrow basis of monopoly. Every company, or corporation of merchants or manufacturers, has endeavoured to exclude all their neighbours from their own branches of trade or manufacture. From their situation, living in towns, and capable, with ease, of combining together, they have commonly been enabled, by their clamours and solicitations, to intimidate or to persuade the government to fall in with their designs, and to make regulations for supporting their interest. When Britain came to have colonies, she endeavoured, by authority, to engross their trade, and to hinder them from trading directly

with other nations. With respect to Ireland, she proceeded upon similar principles.

To prevent the Irish from interfering in the woollen manufacture, the great staple of England, the Irish were prohibited from exporting wool or woollen cloth. To the linen trade of Scotland the same attention was not paid, and the exportation of Irish linens was permitted to Britain and her colonies.

By what is called the *Navigation Act*, made in the reign of Charles II. and varied by subsequent statutes, it is provided, that no goods, except victuals, shall be shipped from Ireland for his Majesty's plantations, and that no plantation-goods shall be carried to Ireland without being first landed in Britain. By a later statute, this prohibition, as to goods not enumerated, was removed.

3. To enforce regulations of so oppressive a nature, it was necessary that the Irish government should be rendered entirely subordinate to that of England; and accordingly, no efforts for that purpose were wanting. By what is called Poyning's law, an attempt

was made to invest the crown with a power of controuling and directing the deliberations of the Irish parliament. In critical emergencies, however, the operation of this law, was, afterwards, occasionally suspended, and, at length, as has been formerly hinted, a method was devised of entirely evading its effect, by the practice of debating upon the *heads* of such bills, as were to be transmitted to England for obtaining the consent of the king and council.

How far the inhabitants of Ireland were bound by the acts of the British legislature, was a question, which, from the time of the revolution, came to be much agitated by lawyers and politicians. Those, who maintained the affirmative, among whom we may reckon almost all the English lawyers, appear to have rested their opinion chiefly on what is called the *right of conquest*. By virtue of his conquest in Ireland, Henry II. and his successors, acquired a dominion over that country, and a right of subjecting its government to that of his own kingdom. Such, in fact, was understood to be

the nature of the Irish government. Though the nation was allowed to hold parliaments of its own, the English parliament exercised over those assemblies a paramount authority, and claimed the privilege of making statutes for Ireland. Instances, indeed, in early times, of English statutes being extended expressly to Ireland, are not very frequent; but a few such instances occur upon record; and from the year 1641, their number was much encreased. By long custom, the intention of the charters granted to Ireland, and the form of government in that country, are to be explained, and if we rely upon this most infallible interpreter of the meaning of parties, we must conclude that the Irish legislature was, from the beginning, subordinate to that of England.

The friends of Irish independence argued very differently, and with more solidity. The right of conquest, they considered as a right, which has no existence, it being impossible that superior force can ever of itself bestow any right. On the contrary, the employment of force, unless in support of a previous right, is an injury, which

becomes the proper object of punishment. If Henry II. had no previous right to invade Ireland, and to settle in that island, he certainly could acquire none by attacking the inhabitants, and stripping them of their property, but rather incited punishment for the crimes, which he committed against them. It is unnecessary to mention that even this right of conquest, supposing it well founded, would not be applicable to a great part of the inhabitants of Ireland, those, at least, who obtained the greatest wealth, and had the principal share in the legislature; for they, instead of being the conquered people, were his English subjects, who had assisted in the conquest, and derived the chief benefit from it.

The nature of the Irish constitution, therefore, is to be inferred, not from the force used by England, but from the acquiescence of the people after this force was withdrawn, and when they could be supposed to have a free choice. At what period the people came to be in those circumstances, it is not very easy to determine. There are

here two particulars, which may seem worthy of notice.

First, with respect to the form of government, to which, from long custom, the nation is understood to have consented, this must be determined from the general usage, not from a few singular exertions made upon extraordinary emergencies. In every rude nation, persons invested with authority are apt to lay hold of opportunities of indulging themselves in arbitrary proceedings; and these irregular acts frequently pass without animadversion or punishment. But, from such abuses, we must not reason concerning what, in the common apprehensions of the people, is legal and constitutional. What is merely overlooked, or is found too troublesome to redress, we must not suppose to be approved. Thus, while the parliament of Ireland was acknowledged to possess a legislative power, and was applied to by the crown in every branch of legislation concerning that country, it is of little moment, that, in some few cases, we also meet with regulations extend-

ing to Ireland, enacted by the English parliament. The independence of the Irish legislature, is to be inferred from the general tenor of proceedings; and it would be absurd to draw an opposite conclusion from a few instances of usurpation or inadvertency.

In the second place, it is to be observed, that the effect of old usage must be limited by considerations of public utility, and that the most universal submission of a people, however long continued, will not give sanction to measures incompatible with the great interests of society. Had the Irish parliament, by general practice, been rendered entirely subordinate to that of England, the pernicious tendency of such a constitution, with respect to Ireland, must appear of such magnitude, as to shock our feelings of justice, and, at any distance of time, to justify the inhabitants in asserting their natural rights.

But this point was not to be determined by abstract reasoning, or by general considerations of the principles of justice. The interest of the more powerful country, as commonly happens, was held a sufficient reason for asserting and extending its authority

over the weaker, and the system of regulating the trade of Ireland, in subserviency to the views of the mercantile people in England, rendered that interest more obvious and conspicuous. To accomplish this purpose, it was requisite that England should possess a power of controuling the Irish courts of justice. Without this she might command, but had no power to execute; her acts of legislation could be made effectual only by her direct influence over the Irish judges.

In the year 1719, a private law-suit in Ireland*, gave rise to a controversy whether there lay an appeal from the Irish tribunals to the house of lords in Britain? and this was followed by an act of the British parliament; calculated for the express purpose of securing the dependency of Ireland, upon the crown of Great Britain; and declaring first, "that the King's majesty, by and with "the consent of the lords. spiritual and tem-"poral, and the commons of Great Britain, "in parliament assembled, had, hath, and of

* Between Sherlock and Annesly.

" right ought to have full power and autho-
" rity to make statutes, of sufficient force,
" and validity, to bind the people and king-
" dom of Ireland."

Secondly, " that the house of lords of
" Ireland, have not, nor of right ought to
" have, any jurisdiction to judge of, affirm
" or reverse, any judgment, sentence, or
" decree, given or made in any court within
" the said kingdom*."

While Britain was thus eager to oppress her sister kingdom, she could not with-hold from this, and from other parts of her empire, that free spirit, which the example of her own constitution, and the general advancement of commerce and manufactures contributed to inspire. The leading men of Ireland saw, with indignation, this narrow-minded policy, and the invidious marks of bondage with which their country was branded. They complained with bitterness of the hard regulations, by which the Irish nation, while they profusely shed their blood in the quarrels of Great Britain, were

* 6 Geo. I. chap. 5.

not only excluded from the commerce of the British colonies, but even denied the privilege of trading with foreign nations. They remonstrated with warmth against the injustice, by which they had been deprived of their national rights, in order to rob them of the fruits of their industry, and by which poverty was entailed upon them as an appendage of that slavery, which they were made to inherit.

In one particular the legislature of Ireland had preserved its independence, the article of taxation. It does not appear that the British parliament ever claimed the privilege of imposing taxes upon that country; and as soon as the Irish began to enjoy the advantages of peace, we find their parliaments discovering a jealousy of this branch of authority, and maintaining it with proper spirit. In the year 1690, the commons of Ireland rejected a money bill, because it had not taken its rise in their house. In 1709, a money bill was returned from England *with alterations;* upon which account it was rejected by the commons. Another instance

of a similar exertion occurs in the year 1768.

The exertions of the Irish nation, in favour of liberty and independence, were frequently counteracted and frustrated by the indirect influence of the crown; and nothing contributed more to this abuse, than the duration of their parliament.

According to the early constitution of those assemblies, both in England, and in Ireland, they might be dissolved at the pleasure of the king; but independent of a dissolution by this authority, they remained during the king's life. The first alteration, in this respect, was made in England, in the reign of King William III. when, from the nation having become jealous of the crown-influence over parliaments, their duration was limited to three years; a period, which, in the reign of George I. was extended to seven. But no such limitation had been introduced in Ireland, and parliaments, according to the ancient plan, continued to endure for the king's life. In the year 1768, the voice of the nation demanding a reform, in this particular, became irresistible;

and a bill for limiting the duration of parliament to eight years, passed the two houses, and obtained the royal assent. The *octennial* parliaments of Ireland, in place of the *septennial* parliaments of England, were preferred at the suggestion of the English ministry, and were probably recommended to them from the view of preventing the inconvenience to government of attending, at the same time, to the new elections of both countries. This reform was the forerunner of others, yet more decisive, in the cause of liberty. The members of the house of commons became now, in some measure, dependent upon their constituents; and their determinations were, of course, more affected by the general feelings of the people.

Britain was involved in great difficulties, and reduced to the utmost perplexity, by the war with her North American colonies; in the prosecution of which Ireland had cheerfully contributed her assistance. Towards the end of that unsuccessful struggle, the interposition of France had exposed the British empire, at home, to the danger of insult and invasion; and afforded to the

Irish a plausible pretence for undertaking the defence of their own country. Volunteers, therefore, in the different parts of the kingdom were associated and embodied for this purpose; and to this exertion, apparently so generous and public spirited, the countenance and approbation of government could not well be refused. In a short time, their number became so great, they acquired so much the confidence of the people, and were animated by such resolution, that they could be neither suppressed nor controuled. Some attempts were made by government to obtain an authority over them, but these were easily discovered and evaded. Thus, while Britain was exhausted by a ruinous war, Ireland had procured an armed force, which nothing could resist, commanded by her own citizens, and firmly determined to procure the redress of her grievances. The consequences were such as might be expected. In 1778, a bill had been brought into the British parliament for the removal of all those restraints, which had been imposed upon the trade of Ireland, but the alarm excited in the trading, and

manufacturing towns of Britain rendered the measure unsuccessful. The Irish, however, conscious of their internal strength, were not disheartened. In their address to the throne, they declared, "it is not by "temporary expedients, but by a free trade "only, that the nation is to be saved from "impending ruin." To guard against a prorogation before they should obtain redress, they refused to grant the supply for the usual term for two years, but passed a short money bill, to which the royal assent was obtained. In the English house of commons, the minister, pressed by the difficulties attending his present critical situation, proposed to repeal the restrictive statutes complained of, and to grant the Irish a free trade to the British colonies, as well as to foreign countries. The propositions which he brought into parliament for that purpose were very readily adopted, and obtained the sanction of the legislature.

The joy of the whole people of Ireland, excited by this decisive and important victory, may easily be conceived. It did

not, however, prevent them from following the tide of their success, and bearing down every remaining obstacle to their complete independence. They had still the mortifying reflection that they owed this relief to the favour of an English ministry; that it had been procured by the necessity of the times; and that, afterwards, from an alteration of circumstances, it might, very probably, be withdrawn. To secure the permanent enjoyment of present advantages, it was necessary they should depend upon themselves. The volunteers, conscious of having power in their hands, were not negligent in using it to the best advantage. By choosing delegates from different quarters, as a sort of representatives of the whole body, by assembling these delegates on different occasions to act in concert with one another, by publishing resolutions and remonstrances expressing their unalterable purpose to assert their liberties, they spread an universal panic over Great Britain, and a belief that it would be in vain to oppose their demands. In this situation a change

of the British ministry took place; and the Marquis of Rockingham, who came to the head of administration, found himself at liberty to comply with his own inclination, and that of his party, by removing those oppressive regulations, which rendered the Irish government subordinate to the British. With this view there passed an act of the British legislature, containing a repeal of Poyning's law; and also a repeal of the statute, by which the parliament of Great Britain is declared to have a power of making laws to bind the Irish nation, and of reviewing the sentences of the Irish tribunals.

At a subsequent period, during the administration of Lord Shelburn, it was suggested that the repeal of the obnoxious statutes above-mentioned was insufficient, and the British parliament was prevailed upon to renounce the principle upon which they had proceeded, by relinquishing, on the part of Great Britain, all similar claims for the future. The former concession was necessary for the security of Ireland; the latter was merely the effect of popular

clamour, which produced a juvenile, though, perhaps, a pardonable degree of triumph and exultation.

By these alterations Ireland became an independent kingdom, connected by a federal union with Britain, but possessing within itself a supreme legislative assembly, and supreme courts for the distribution of justice.

ESSAY II.

Political Consequences of the Revolution—Subsequent Changes in the State of the Nation —Influence of the Crown.

THE alterations made in the state of the government by what is called the revolution, in 1688, and by the other public regulations in the reign of William III. were judicious, moderate, and prudent. With a perfect adherence to the spirit, and with as little deviation as possible from the ancient forms of the constitution, they were well calculated to restrain the arbitrary conduct of the sovereign, and appeared to establish a limited monarchy upon a solid and permanent basis.

All the avenues and passes, through which the prerogative had formerly invaded the rights of the people, were now apparently guarded and secured. The king could neither maintain troops, nor obtain the necessary supplies, without the annual interposition of the legislature, and therefore was laid

under the inevitable necessity of calling regular and frequent meetings of Parliament. The former disputes upon that subject were consequently at an end. Any future injunction upon the sovereign, to perform his duty in this respect, was now superseded. As he could no longer procure money, or carry on the business of government, without parliamentary aid, it was to be expected that no future complaints of his neglecting to convene that assembly would ever be heard. It was no longer prudent for him to hazard the angry dissolution of a parliament for refusing to comply with his demands; a measure tending to engender enmity and resentment in that class of men, whose good will and cordial affection were become indispensably requisite. In a word, the executive power was rendered completely subordinate to the legislative; which is agreeable to the natural order of things; and without which there can be no free government.

The legislative power was, by the ancient structure of the constitution, lodged in the assembly composed of king, lords, and commons; so that the king, to whom was commit-

ted the province of executing the laws, had also a great share in making them. But this regulation, which is justly considered by political writers, as inconsistent with the perfection of a free government, has been, in a great measure, removed by custom. As every bill must pass through the two houses before it can receive the royal assent, and as the king cannot legally interfere in bills depending before either house, the interposition of his negative would be apt to excite such national clamour as no wise prince would choose to incur, and would be repugnant to the principles of the constitution, by evincing greater confidence in the advice of other persons than of the national council.* For a long time, therefore, the exercise of this branch of power in the crown has been entirely disused, and the legislative has been of course, placed in different hands from the executive.

Comparing the two houses of parliament with each other, the commons, consisting of

* See the debates upon this subject soon after the revolution. Hatsell's Proceedings of Parliament.

national representatives, sustain the popular part of the legislature, while the peers sustain the aristocratical. From circumstances, which I had formerly occasion to observe, the commons acquired the exclusive power of bringing in all money bills, and the peers have only that of assenting, or interposing their negative to the grant. This part of the constitution, which arose from the ancient forms of deliberation, is now supported by considerations of the highest expediency. The commons represent all the property of the kingdom, that of the peerage alone excepted; and therefore it may be supposed, that from a regard to their own interest, as well as that of the community at large, they will be induced to prevent the imposition of unreasonable taxes. The crown, on the other hand, is interested to augment the public revenue; and the peers, who are created by the crown, and have an immediate connection with the higher offices and places in its disposal, may be suspected of adhering invariably to its interest. The house of peers, therefore, in matters of taxation, is allowed to vote in favour of the

people, but not in favour of the crown. It cannot grant supplies, but may interpose a negative upon those which have been suggested by the commons.

As it had long been a maxim in the English government, "that the king can do no wrong," by which is meant, that his ministers are alone responsible for ordinary acts of mal-administration, it was hence inferred, that these ministers must be allowed exclusively to direct and govern the state machine; for it would be the height of injustice to load them with the crimes of another, nor could it be expected that any man of spirit would submit to be a minister upon such terms. Were it even possible to find persons willing to answer for measures which they were not permitted to guide, their nominal administration would not serve the purpose intended; as the responsibility of such mean and servile officers could afford no security to the public, that the abuses of the executive power might be restrained by the terrors of such vicarious punishment.

Thus, by the principles of the constitution, the real exercise of the executive or

ministerial power came to be regularly, though tacitly, committed to a set of ministers, appointed by the king during pleasure. Their number, though not accurately fixed, was in some measure circumscribed by that of the chief official situations in the gift of the crown; and the individuals belonging to this body were still more distinctly pointed out, and recognized by the public, from their composing a select, or cabinet council, by whose concurrence and direction the administration was visibly conducted.

These ministers being nominated or displaced at the discretion of the crown, their continuance in office was, of course, brought under the controul of the two houses of parliament, and more especially under that of the commons, upon whom, by their power of granting or withholding supplies, the movements of government ultimately depended. From the nature of the constitution, tending to attract the attention of the public to the conduct of its managers, and from circumstances attending the direction of all political measures, it was to be expected that this controul of the legislature over the ap-

pointment of the principal officers of state would be frequently exercised. From the event of a war, not corresponding to the sanguine expectations of the people; from the soliciting and enforcing new taxes, which are usually paid with reluctance, and productive of bad humour; from the unfortunate issue of hazardous transactions, not to mention the errors and blunders which are unavoidable in difficult emergencies, or even the corrupt designs that may be discovered or suspected, every junto of ministers is likely in a course of time, to become, in its turn, unpopular, and even to excite the public indignation and resentment. From the multitude of expectants, compared with those who can possibly enjoy places under government, the number of persons who think themselves not rewarded in proportion to their merits, is apt, at the same time, to be continually increasing, and to supply the party in opposition with new reinforcements. Thus, in the natural progress of things, it might be expected that the growing clamour and discontent against every ministry which had long remained in power would be such

as to clog and obstruct their measures, to entangle them in difficulties more and more inextricable, and at length to produce a parliamentary application for their removal.

By the operation of these combined circumstances the English government seemed, in the executive branch, to possess the advantages both of a monarchy and republic, by uniting the dignity and authority of an hereditary monarch, calculated to repress insurrection and disorder, with the joint deliberation of several chief executive officers, and a frequent rotation of their offices, tending to guard against the tyranny of a single person.

In the judicial department, it was the object to give decisions, partly according to the rules of law founded upon long experience and observation, partly upon the feelings of equity and the principles of common sense. In the former view professional judges were appointed by the crown: in the latter, jury-men were selected from among the people. To secure, as far as possible, the independence of judges, they were, for the most part, appointed for life. To hin-

der jury-men from acquiring the habits of professional judges, they were chosen for each particular cause. So far as the king had retained the direction of public prosecutions for crimes, various regulations were made to prevent the abuses of this power by arbitrary imprisonment, or other acts of oppression*.

Such were the outlines of that constitution which, through many accidental changes, and by a course of gradual improvements upon the primitive system of the European nations, was finally established in the reign of William III. a mixed form of government, but remarkable for its beautiful simplicity, and in which the powers committed to different orders of men were so modelled and adjusted as to become subservient to one great purpose, the preservation of the rights and liberties of the people.

* The most remarkable of those regulations, what is called the *habeas corpus*, by which any person imprisoned on pretence of a crime, may require that his trial should be commenced and finished within a certain time, originated in the *great charters*, and was rendered more specific in the reigns of Charles I. and Charles II.

We are not, however, to dream of perfection in any human workmanship. Far less are we to imagine that a government can be so contrived, as, for ages, to remain equally suited to a nation whose condition and circumstances are perpetually changing. As the husbandman varies his mode of culture and management, according to the meliorations of the soil, and to the alterations in the state of his farm, or of the markets, the legislator must accommodate his regulations to the progressive changes in the condition of the people for whom they are intended, to the progress in manufactures and commerce, their increase in opulence, and their advances in luxury or in refinement.

In England there were two great changes in the state of society, the remarkable appearance of which may be dated from the revolution, though their commencement was doubtless earlier, and the rapid progress of which may be traced through the whole of the following century. The first is the growing influence of the crown, arising from the patronage which it has acquired, and the

correspondent habits of dependence in the people which have thence been produced.

After the government had been settled by the regulations which took place at the revolution, and in the reign of William III. parliament no longer entertained any jealousy of encroachments from the prerogative, and became willing to grant supplies with a liberality of which there was formerly no example. The extensive enterprises in which the crown was engaged, and in which the interest of the nation was deeply involved; the settlement of Britain, the reduction of Ireland, the prosecution of the war with France, were productive of great expence, which the public could not view in any other light than at the price of their liberties, and therefore could not decently, or with any colour of justice, refuse to defray. In a subsequent period, new situations, though less urgent, afforded a plausible pretence for new demands; which, from various reasons, whether of a public or private nature were frequently complied with. England becoming gradually more opulent and powerful, was led, from vanity or ambition,

to take a greater share in the disputes of her neighbours, and to assume a higher rank in the scale of nations. Her civil and military establishments became gradually more extensive; the management and protection of her increasing wealth required a greater variety of regulations; and the number of her officers and magistrates, in all the departments of administration, was, of course, augmented. An augmentation of the public revenue, to supply the growing wants of the state, was thus rendered indispensable.

"In a course of time these public burdens became familiar and habitual, both to parliament and to the nation, and the imposition of new taxes, which, in the beginning, had often excited alarm and clamour, was at length reduced to an ordinary transaction, requiring little examination or attention, and of which the refusal would betray uncommon suspicion and discontent. It happened in this as it usually happens in cases of private liberality. A donation which has been frequently and regularly bestowed comes, after a length of time, to be regarded as a kind of debt; and to withhold it is looked upon as a

species of injury. When parliament had been accustomed to confide in the reports of ministry, and, without much enquiry to acquiesce in their demands, its future confidence and acquiescence were expected; and the money came to be sometimes granted even in cases where the measures of administration, which had occasioned the expence, were condemned and severely censured.

But notwithstanding the readiness of parliament to stretch every nerve in supplying the demands of the executive government, the necessities of administration surpassed, occasionally, what the circumstances of the nation were thought able to afford. Having incurred an expence beyond what the taxes which could be levied within the year were sufficient to repay, ministry endeavoured to relieve themselves by such an expedient, as in a similar case, has commonly been suggested to individuals. They anticipated the national income, by borrowing the money required, and assigning a particular branch of revenue for the security of the creditor. The funds appropriated to this purpose were not, at first, intended to remain under per-

petual mortgage; being sufficient, not only to discharge the yearly interest of the debt, but even to clear the incumbrance in a few years. Successive experiments, however, encouraged ministers to venture upon still more expensive undertakings; the quantity of money in circulation, a consequence of the flourishing state of commerce, enabled them easily to find the sums that were wanted; and by giving to the creditor a high rate of interest, transferrable at pleasure, with other pecuniary emoluments, they had no difficulty in persuading him entirely to sink his capital. In this manner they introduced, what is called, a *debt in perpetuity*, the amount of which, for obvious reasons, has been continually and rapidly increasing. By this expedient, a minister, whose interest may lead him to spend the whole public income in time of peace, is enabled to draw upon futurity for the additional expence of maintaining a war; and as in countries advancing rapidly in luxury, dissipation, and extravagance, every succeeding war is likely to be more expensive than the former, his

draughts can hardly fail to advance in the same proportion.

The public revenue has thus come to be divided into two great branches; that which is intended to defray the annual expence of government, and that which is levied to discharge the annual interest of the national debt. The former is plainly the source of influence in the crown, in proportion to the patronage resulting from the disposal of the money. All who enjoy, or who expect offices, or places of emolument, in the gift of the crown, and even in some degree their kindred and connections, may be expected to court, and to support that interest upon which they depend; to acquire suitable habits, opinions, and prejudices, and in such disputes or differences as occur between prerogative and privilege, to arrange themselves under the ministerial standard.

In the same class with the patronage derived from this ordinary revenue, we may consider that which arises from various other offices, or places of honour and profit, in the gift, or under the controul and direction of administration, though supported

by different funds; such as those proceeding from the government of Ireland, or of the British colonies; the higher dignities in the church; the lucrative places in the service of the East India company, and many establishments for education and for charitable purposes. The extent of this patronage cannot easily be calculated; though it is apparently immense, and has been advancing in a highly accelerated *ratio*, from the revolution to the present time.

The other great branch of the public revenue, what is levied to pay the interest of the national debt, ought to be examined in connection with the money borrowed, by which that debt was contracted.

The money borrowed for the support of a war is the source of influence to the crown in two different ways. First, by its immediate expenditure, which occasions an immense patronage, from the sudden increase of the army and navy, the employment of numerous contractors and other civil officers, the appendages of war, and the various transactions which that active and violent state of the country may pro-

duce. Secondly, from the advantages accruing to those rich individuals, who lend the money to government, and who, by availing themselves of the pressing demands of the public, are enabled to reap more profit from the loan, than could be drawn from any other branch of trade.

In this situation the gain of the money-lenders, and of all who are employed in the service of the state, is evidently so much the greater, as the money is commonly spent, and the transactions of government are made, upon the spur of the occasion, amid the hurry and agitation of strong passions, without leisure to deliberate, and without opportunities of practising the ordinary rules of prudence and economy. In such cases, there is unavoidably a negligent waste, a precipitate rashness, in the public expenditure, from which those vermin, who feed upon the necessities of their country, enjoy a plentiful repast.

Thus a war, though generally hurtful to the community at large, proves often highly beneficial to a portion of its members; to the landed gentlemen, who, by serving in

the army and navy, obtain a provision for themselves and their families; and those of the mercantile interest, who, by the extensive loans to government, and by lucrative employments, obtain the means of accumulating princely fortunes. From these private considerations it happens, that so much blood and treasure is frequently consumed in wars, undertaken from trivial causes, and continued without any rational prospect of public advantage.

To be sensible of the extent of this evil we need only consider, that, of the period which has elapsed from the revolution to the present time, between a third and one-half has been employed in wars, prosecuted in this expensive and improvident manner, and producing an incessant and regularly accelerated accumulation of public debt, which now amounts to more than five hundred millions*. It cannot escape observation, that the uncommon influence acquired by the crown, while the nation is in a state of warfare, will not be immediately extin-

* See resolution of the House of Commons, 5th Jan. and 1st Feb. 1801.

guished upon the conclusion of a peace, but, from the usual effects of habit, by remembrance of the past, and by anticipation of future emoluments, may in some measure be retained and propagated from one military harvest to another.

With respect to the permanent funds created for paying the interest of the national debt, these give rise to a separate influence of the crown; *first*, by inducing the holders of stock to promote the popularity of ministers, and to support their measures, in order to raise the value of those funds; *secondly*, by the number of public officers, in the nomination of the king, who are employed in collecting or managing this branch of the revenue.

Upon the whole, the ordinary public revenue directly at the disposal of the crown, or indirectly contributing to its influence, which, immediately before the revolution, amounted to about two millions yearly, has, by the gradual expansion of the two great branches already mentioned, risen to the prodigious annual sum of above thirty millions; and this without including the

value of those numerous offices and places, in the gift of the crown, which are supported by other funds than the national taxes.

That the secret influence of the crown has been continually increasing from this change of circumstances will hardly be doubted. But has it increased in proportion to the rise of the public revenue, and to the increase in the value of all the offices and emoluments at the disposal of administration? This appears to merit a particular examination.

To have a full view of this question, it is proper to observe, that the augmentation of the public revenue, since the accession of William III. has proceeded from three different causes.

1. It has proceeded, in part, from the increasing wealth of the nation. The defence of property is one of the great purposes of government; and according as more wealth has been accumulated by any people, its protection and security will cost more trouble; and, by giving rise to a more intricate system of regulations, will

require the employment of a greater number of persons in the service of administration. The increase of riches in a country has, at the same time, a tendency to raise the price of commodities, as well as, from fashion, to introduce more expensive modes of living; and this makes it necessary that the different servants of government, to preserve the same rank as formerly, should obtain a suitable advancement of emoluments. An increase of taxes, in some shape or other, is thus rendered indispensable.

So far as an augmentation of the revenue has arisen from the greater difficulty in the protection of property, producing a more intricate system of management, it must undoubtedly have increased the influence of the crown; but so far as this augmentation has proceeded from a rise in the expence of living, there seems no ground for ascribing to it any such tendency. Supposing the expence of living to be trebled or quadrupled since the revolution, and that upon this account the public revenue has been increased in the same proportion; this increase will neither enable ministers to

hire more servants, nor to reward them better; nor if it were employed even in the direct operation of bribery, would it produce a greater effect.

2. The augmentation of the public revenue has likewise been partly derived from an enlargement of the empire, and from a multiplication of the inhabitants. The greater the number of people included in one system of government, the management of their public concerns will be rendered the more complex, and of consequence more expensive. That this circumstance has contributed greatly to extend the influence of the sovereign is unquestionable.

The larger and more populous any empire becomes, that is, the greater the number of individuals paying taxes, the influence of the king, who has the disposal of the revenue, will, other circumstances being equal, become so much the greater; because that revenue acquires a greater superiority over the wealth of any one of his subjects, and overbalances more decisively that of any junto of the people, who could possibly associate for opposing and

controuling his authority. Suppose, for example, a nation composed of no more than 100,000 men, paying taxes at the rate of forty shillings each person. The revenue, which would thence arise, of 200,000*l.* a year, would probably not render the sovereign much richer than a few of his most opulent subjects, and consequently, after deducting the sum requisite for maintaining his family, would be totally inadequate to the support of his rank.

If the state were so enlarged that the people, paying taxes at the same rate, amounted to a million, it is evident, that by the revenue of two millions yearly, which would thus be levied, the king would be exalted in a much greater proportion, and would have little reason to fear that his influence might be counterbalanced by any casual accumulation of property in the hands of his refractory subjects. By supposing a state to comprehend twenty or thirty millions, we may conceive that the revenue, according to the same rate of taxation, would bear down all opposition, and become perfectly irresistible.

Lastly, the increase of the public revenue, during the period under consideration, may, perhaps chiefly, be imputed to the negligence and mismanagement incident to all extensive undertakings. Whoever considers the waste and bad economy which commonly take place in managing the private estate of a rich individual; the idleness and embezzlement of servants; the inattention, the fraudulent and collusive practices of stewards and overseers, may easily conceive the still greater abuses that are likely to occur in managing the concerns of a great empire. As a strict oversight is impossible, all the servants in the various departments of government are left in some measure to their own discretion, and are at liberty to practice innumerable expedients for promoting their own interest. They will endeavour, therefore, we may suppose, to improve their situation in two different ways: first, by laying hold of every pretence, and employing every method to increase their perquisites and emoluments: secondly, by doing as little as they possibly can, without incurring either

punishment or censure; so that, in order to supply their deficiencies, a variety of assistants and inspectors must be appointed. The expence of administration is thus unnecessarily augmented, both by a needless multiplication of the officers in the service of government, and by bestowing upon them a greater income than the performance of their duty gives them any right to demand. To what a monstrous height has this abuse, which has continued for more than a century, been at length carried! How many officers, in church and state, obtain immense fortunes from the public for doing no work, or next to none! How many are often employed to perform the duty which might easily be performed by a single person! The tendency of this to increase the patronage, and consequently the influence of the crown, is too obvious to require illustration.

It should seem, therefore, that the augmentation of the public revenue, so far as it has proceeded from any other circumstance, than an augmentation in the gene-

ral expence of living, has been attended with a proportional increase in the patronage and influence of the crown, and has contributed to strengthen the monarchical part of the constitution.

We may further remark, that the influence, arising from the causes already specified, is apt to be the greater, as it operates upon the manners and habits of a mercantile people: a people engrossed by lucrative trades, and professions, whose great object is gain, and whose ruling principle is avarice: a people whose distinguishing feature, as a great author observes, is justice; equally opposed to dishonesty on the one hand, and to generosity on the other; not that nice and delicate justice, the offspring of refined humanity, but that coarse, though useful virtue, the guardian of contracts and promises, whose guide is the square and the compass, and whose protector is the gallows. By a people of this description, no opportunity of earning a penny is to be lost; and whatever holds out a view of interest, without violating any

municipal law, or incurring any hazard, is to be warmly embraced. *Quærenda pecunia primum.*

From the time of the revolution, accordingly, we may trace, in some measure, a new order of things; a new principle of authority, which is worthy the attention of all who speculate upon political subjects. Before that period, the friends of liberty dreaded only the direct encroachments of the prerogative: they have since learnt to entertain stronger apprehensions of the secret motives of interest which the crown may hold up to individuals, and by which it may seduce them from the duty which they owe to the public. To what a height, in fact, has this influence been raised in all the departments of government, and how extensively has it pervaded all ranks and descriptions of the inhabitants: in the army, in the church, at the bar, in the republic of letters, in finance, in mercantile and manufacturing corporations: not to mention pensioners and placemen; together with the various officers connected with the distribution of justice, and the execution of

the laws, the corps diplomatique, and the members of the king's confidential council. With what a powerful charm does it operate in regulating opinions, in healing grievances, in stifling clamours, in quieting the noisy patriot, in extinguishing the most furious opposition! It is the great opiate which inspires political courage, and lulls reflection; which animates the statesman to despise the resentment of the people; which drowns the memory of his former professions, and deadens, perhaps, the shame and remorse of pulling down the edifice which he had formerly reared.

Nor is the influence, founded on the numerous offices in the gift of the crown, confined to those who are in possession and in expectation of such offices, or even to their numerous relations and friends. In every country, a great majority of the people immersed in pursuits of gain, devoted to pleasure, unaccustomed to political speculation, or destitute of that firmness of character, which enables a man to assert the truth through good report, and through bad, are apt to take their opinions, in a great

measure from those around them. Such people are always to be found in the party prevailing for the time, whether the current may run in the channel of prerogative or of freedom; like those who are indifferent in religion, they are always supposed to hold the ruling faith, and counted as members of the established church. It is therefore of infinite consequence to have a number of partisans scattered through the nation, at all times zealous to support the administration, and ready to extol their measures. In this way, placemen, pensioners and expectants are of the most essential service to their employers. Like people stationed in different parts of a theatre to support a new play, they set up such an enthusiastic and noisy applause, as by giving an appearance of general approbation, drowns all opposition, confounds the [illegible] and secures the concurrence of that immense mass of persons who either want leisure or talents to judge for themselves. In this manner it frequently happens that good and bad administrations have nearly an equal appearance of

popularity, and that ruinous measures seem to be sanctioned by the opinion of the nation.

The progressive advancement of influence in the crown, has gradually been productive of changes in the methods of conducting the business of the legislature. It was early an essential maxim in the English government, as I formerly observed, that every proposal for a new statute should originate in either house of parliament; and that it could not come under the consideration of the king, until it had passed through the two houses. The crown, therefore, had merely a negative upon the resolutions of parliament, a power of preventing the state vessel from wandering into a new tract, not that of putting it in motion, or of directing its course. From the circumstances which have been mentioned, this order of proceeding is, in a good measure, inverted. Though the king had no right to interfere in the deliberations of parliament; yet his ministers, as members of either house, might suggest any bill to its consideration; and, from the secret influence of the crown,

the bills introduced in this manner were likely to obtain a favourable hearing, and to be most successful. At present almost all bills of importance are thus indirectly brought into parliament by the crown, and in all ordinary cases, are supported and passed by a great majority. Thus while the king no longer exercises his original prerogative of withholding the royal assent from the determinations of parliament, he has in reality acquired the more important power of proposing the laws, and the privilege of debate which remains in the two houses, is reduced to a mere passive power of controul; that is, to be little more than a negative; a negative too, which, in the ordinary state of political controversy, can rarely be exercised.

Has there occurred nothing on the other side to counterbalance the effect of this growing patronage, and its correspondent influence? Have the progressive changes in the state of society, since the time of the revolution-settlement, contributed uniformly to support the authority of the monarch,

and can we discover no circumstances of an opposite nature tending to preserve the former equilibrium, by supporting the popular part of our constitution? The rapid improvements of arts and manufactures, and the correspondent extension of commerce, which followed the clear and accurate limitation of the prerogative, produced a degree of wealth and affluence, which diffused a feeling of independence and a high spirit of liberty, through the great body of the people; while the advancement of science and literature dissipated the narrow political prejudices which had prevailed, and introduced such principles as were more favourable to the equal rights of mankind. This is the other great change in the state of society, to which I alluded in the beginning of this chapter, and of which I shall now proceed to give an account.

In a review of the different reigns, from that of William III. to the present time, I shall afterwards endeavour to trace the struggles between those two opposite principles, of regal influence and popular inde-

pendence, and to point out the chief incidents of a constitutional history, lying in a good measure beneath that common surface of events which occupies the details of the vulgar historian.



ESSAY III.

The Advancement of Manufactures, Commerce, and the Arts, since the Reign of William III.; and the Tendency of this Advancement to diffuse a Spirit of Liberty and Independence.

THE natural advantages of England, in the cultivation of wool, having promoted her woollen manufacture, it was to be expected that her industry, and her capital, derived from that source, would be communicated to other branches of labour, in which they might be employed with similar success. Her maritime situation, by extending the benefit of water-carriage over a great part of the island, and by rendering many of the inhabitants acquainted with navigation, was calculated to produce a similar extension of commerce, and to open a foreign market for such of her commodities as exceeded her internal consumption. The full establishment of a regular and free constitution was alone wanting to improve these favourable

circumstances, by exciting that energy and vigour which political liberty, and the secure possession and enjoyment of property are wont to inspire. This was obtained by the memorable Revolution in 1688, which completed, and reduced into practice, a government of a more popular nature, and better fitted to secure the natural rights of mankind, than had ever taken place in a great nation. From this happy period, therefore, commerce and manufactures assumed a new aspect, and, continuing to advance with rapidity, produced innumerable changes in the state of society, and in the character and manners of the people.

It would be superfluous to observe, that these improvements have been attended with correspondent advances in agriculture, and in the arts connected with it. Commerce and manufactures, by increasing wealth and population, must enhance the demand for provisions; and consequently, by augmenting the profits of the farmer, cannot fail to stimulate his industry and activity. It will be found, accordingly, from the general history of the world, that, in all countries

where there is no trade, the cultivation of the ground, if at all known, is performed in a rude and slovenly manner; and that a considerable progress of mercantile improvements has generally preceded an equal degree of skill and dexterity in the several branches of husbandry. The cultivation of the ground, as Dr. Smith justly observes, can never, in any country, approach to perfection, until the price of butcher-meat has, from the diffusion of wealth, risen to such a pitch as will induce the farmer to employ his best grounds, at least occasionally, in the pasturing of cattle; by which he may obtain a constant supply of manure, sufficient to repair that part of his land which has been exhausted by tillage. As England has been long in that situation, her best land is frequently retained for the sole purpose of feeding cattle, or in what is called *meadow*; while in Scotland, whose mercantile and agricultural improvements have been much later, there is no such general practice; and the appellation of *meadow*, is only given to those marshy

grounds, which, for want of draining, are unfit for the plough.

The same circumstances, which thus promoted the internal trade of England, were no less favourable to her commercial intercourse with other nations. The encouragement of her foreign trade became a great object as far back as the reign of James I. and of Elizabeth; when trading companies were erected by public authority, and colonies, under the protection of government, were formed in distant parts of the globe. Those great companies were, at the same time, invested with exclusive privileges, calculated to secure them in the monopoly of the several branches of trade for which they had been incorporated. In the infancy of commerce, such regulations were, perhaps, requisite for the encouragement of new and hazardous undertakings; and their apparent equity, inasmuch as they bestowed upon the adventurers the fruit of their own spirited activity, could hardly be disputed. But in a subsequent period, when the progress of commercial improvements had produced large capitals,

and a numerous body of merchants, ready to engage in every enterprise which promised an adequate, though, perhaps, a distant return of profit, it began to be perceived that these monopolies were, in every view, inconvenient and pernicious. They contributed to check any competition among the workmen engaged in producing those commodities, which were the subject of the monopoly trade; and, consequently, tended to diminish the *quantity*, as well as to degrade the *quality*, of those commodities. They also prevented all competition in the sale of such commodities, and enabled the monopolists, by starving the market, to advance their price in proportion. Thus the community at large became a sufferer in two respects; first, by procuring goods of an inferior quality to what might otherwise have been expected; secondly, by being obliged to purchase them above their natural rate. Since the Revolution, therefore, these exclusive trading companies have been gradually abolished; and their trade laid open to the whole nation. The monopoly of the East India company has alone

been excepted, and continues to be enforced with the utmost rigour. Some authors have endeavoured, from the distance of the country, and from the extent and other peculiarities of the Indian trade, to justify this exception; but, after all, there is little room to doubt, that it has proceeded from political, more than from commercial considerations, and that the strength, not the weakness of this company, is the real ground of the support which it has of late received from government.

The system of imposing restrictions upon commerce has not been directed solely to the purpose of encouraging particular trading companies. Politicians have conceived that individuals, in prosecuting schemes of private interest, were it not for the watchful inspection and controul of government, might be tempted to employ their labour, and their capitals, upon such branches of trade as are less beneficial to the public than others; and that they ought to be restrained and diverted from so doing by numerous regulations; by taxes, prohibitions, and bounties. In particular, the view of pre-

serving a favourable balance of our trade with foreign nations, ought to drive us out of every market in which our imports exceed our exports. Our trade with every foreign country was regarded as profitable, if we sent to it more goods than we received, and, consequently, obtained a surplus in money. If the contrary, it was considered as unprofitable and hurtful. The maxim which runs through the older writers on trade, appears now to be almost universally exploded. When we give to our neighbours money for useful and marketable commodities, we obtain a real value, and an adequate mercantile profit, no less than when we give commodities for their money. To carry on the trade of our country with advantage, and to supply the wants of the inhabitants, it may often be requisite that we should purchase the goods of particular nations, who have not an equal demand for our manufactures; but this will be compensated by our trade with others, who are in opposite circumstances, and who give to us a surplus in money. If our consumption be not greater than our productions; that

is, if we are an industrious people; the balance of our trade with all the world, taken complexly, whatever may be the case with particular nations, can never be against us: and, if we have commodities for which there is a general demand, we can seldom remain long without an opportunity of turning them into money.

The quantity of the current species upon the face of the globe is naturally, and without any artificial direction, adjusted to the extent of the circulation in each particular country; for its occasional scarcity, in any one quarter, would raise its value in that place, and make it constantly flow thither until the equilibrium should be restored.

Upon the whole, there is good reason to conclude, that the mercantile people are the best judges of their own interest, and that, by pursuing those lines of trade which they find most beneficial to themselves, they are likely to produce, in most cases, the greatest benefit to the public. The administrators of government can seldom, from their own knowledge, be sufficiently qualified to judge in matters of this kind: and

they are likely to be directed by persons who have an interest to mislead them. They have, therefore, frequently contributed more to hurt, than to improve the commercial machine, by their tampering; and their interpositions, besides loading the public with immediate expence, from the bounties bestowed upon the favourite branches of trade, have diverted the mercantile capitals of the nation into channels, very different from their natural course, in which they have been productive of less profit, than they would otherwise have yielded.

For inculcating this truth, and placing it in a great variety of lights, the world is much indebted to the philosophers of a neighbouring country; and still more to the ingenious and profound author of "The "Causes of the Wealth of Nations;" by whom the subject is explained and illustrated in a manner that affords the fullest conviction. The universal approbation which this new doctrine has met with in the higher classes of mercantile people, in opposition to a rooted prejudice, connected with the

private interests of a numerous body of men, is, of itself, a decisive proof of the high advances of commercial improvement, and of the enlarged views of political economy, by which the present age has become so eminently distinguished.

The great extension of those means, which have been devised to promote and facilitate the circulation of commodities, affords another satisfactory illustration of the great extent, and the rapid increase, of our commercial dealings.

The introduction of money was a necessary contrivance for producing an exchange between persons, who had no reciprocal demand for the goods of each other. By this expedient, any person, provided with a sufficient quantity of the current species, was in a condition to purchase from every one who had goods to dispose of. But when, in the progress of commerce, merchants came to be engaged in a multiplicity of transactions, the quantity of money which they were obliged, at all times, to keep in their possession, for satisfying their occasional demands, became proportionably

large; and the retaining so much dead stock, which yielded no profit, was an inconvenience, from which, we may easily suppose, they endeavoured, by every possible means, to relieve themselves. If they had the reputation of wealth, they might sometimes persuade a creditor to accept of their personal obligation in place of immediate payment; and their promissory note, properly authenticated, might even be regarded as nearly equivalent to ready money, and might therefore pass from hand to hand in the purchase of goods. From an extension of this practice proceeded the establishment of *banks*, or mercantile companies, possessed of sufficient wealth to ensure their good credit, who made it a regular business, upon receiving an equivalent, to issue promissory notes payable on demand; and even, upon a suitable premium, to advance money upon the personal obligation of others. These institutions were introduced into the mercantile countries of Europe, from the interposition of public authority, by which the members of each banking company were incorporated, and exempted from being

liable to their creditors beyond the extent of a certain specified capital. Upon this footing, the Bank of England was erected, soon after the accession of William III.; and at a subsequent period, two smaller companies, of a similar nature, were established in the northern part of the island. But the advantages derived from this branch of trade, have since produced innumerable private adventurers over the country, who, without any aid from government, and consequently becoming liable to the amount of their whole fortunes, have engaged in the banking business, and appear to have pushed all its branches to their utmost extent. By the assistance of these banks, whether public or private, the nation has obtained a variety of resources for procuring money upon a sudden demand, and for turning it to an immediate account as soon as the demand is over; so that the quantity of current specie, which must ever lie unemployed in the hands of an individual, has been rendered more and more insignificant.

The same effect has flowed indirectly from the establishment of the funds belong-

ing to some great mercantile corporations, and of those created by the public for paying the interest of the national debt; the nature of which I shall have occasion hereafter to consider. As every one is permitted to buy or sell, at his conveniency, greater or smaller shares in those funds, he has thus the command of money for any lucrative undertaking, and may replace it with profit whenever it ceases to be better employed.

In these progressive improvements of our commercial policy, without entering farther into particulars, we cannot fail to recognize the appearances of a nation which has long enjoyed all the advantages of high prosperity in trade and manufactures; and it remains to enquire, how far the uninterrupted possession, and daily increase of these blessings, have contributed to inspire the people with higher notions of liberty, and more ardent zeal in defence of their privileges.

The spirit of liberty appears, in commercial countries, to depend chiefly upon two circumstances: first, the condition of the people relative to the distribution of pro-

perty, and the means of subsistence; secondly, the facility with which the several members of society are enabled to associate and to act in concert with one another.

1. With respect to the former circumstance, the whole property of such a country, and the subsistence of all the inhabitants, may, according to the phraseology of late writers upon political economy, be derived from three different sources; from the rent of land or water; from the profits of stock or capital; and from the wages of labour: and, in conformity to this arrangement, the inhabitants may be divided into landlords, capitalists, and labourers.

Of labourers, who form the lowest class, the situation and way of life must, in every country, render them in some degree dependent upon the person who gives them employment. Having little or no property, and earning a bare subsistence by their daily labour, they are placed in a state of inferiority which commonly disposes them to feel some respect for their master; they have an interest to avoid any difference with him; and in the execution of their work,

being constantly required to follow his directions, they are apt, in some degree, to acquire habits of submission to his will.

The relative condition of the labouring people, however, must vary considerably according to the differences which occur in the general state of society. In rude countries, even where domestic slavery is excluded, the chief labourers are either menial servants, or such as cultivate the ground; and, as they generally continue for life in the service of the same person, his influence over them is naturally very great. But, in commercial countries, the bond of union between the workmen and their employer is gradually loosened. There, the most numerous class of labourers are those employed in subserviency to trade or manufactures; and they are so indiscriminately engaged in the service of different persons, that they feel but little the loss of a particular master, with whom they have formed but a slight connection. When a country, at the same time, is rapidly advancing in trade, the demand for labourers is proportionably great; their wages are continually

rising; instead of soliciting employment, they are courted to accept of it; and they enjoy a degree of affluence and of importance, which is frequently productive of insolence and licentiousness.

That the labouring people in Britain have, for some time, been raised to this enviable situation, is evident from a variety of circumstances; from the high price of labour, and the difficulty of procuring workmen; from the absurd attempts of the legislature to regulate their wages, and to prevent them from deserting particular employments; from the zeal displayed by the lower orders in the vindication of their political, as well as of their private rights; and, above all, from the jealousy and alarm with which this disposition has, of late, so universally impressed their superiors.

When a labourer has acquired so much property as will enable him, without wages, to subsist until he has manufactured a particular commodity, he may then gain, upon the sale of it, a profit over and above the ordinary value of his labour. In proportion to the enlargement of his capital, his

productions, by the employment of subordinate hands will be multiplied, and his profits, of course, extended. Thus, according as the business of producing and disposing of commodities becomes more extensive and complicated, it is gradually subdivided into various departments, and gives rise to the several classes, of manufacturers, tradesmen, and merchants.

To discover the different sources of mercantile profit, we may distinguish two sorts of stock, or capital, belonging to a manufacturer or merchant; the *circulating*, and the *permanent* stock; the former comprehending the goods which he brings to market; the latter, the houses, the machinery, and the various accommodations which he requires for the manufacture or sale of his goods.

To a manufacturer, the circulating stock affords a profit, by enabling him to unite many different branches of labour upon the same commodity, and, consequently, to save that expence of carriage, which would be incurred if those branches were separately performed in different places, and the

amount afterwards collected. If, for example, the several operations requisite in the woollen manufacture were to be performed separately, by workmen at a distance from each other, there would be an expence of carriage necessary to unite the effect of their several productions, which is totally avoided by collecting the different hands in the same neighbourhood, and accumulating their labour upon the same commodity. The manufacturer, therefore, draws a return for his capital, inasmuch as it has been the means of shortening the labour, and consequently of diminishing the expence of his manufacture.

It is unnecessary to observe, that by the saving of carriage there is also a saving of *time*, which is no less valuable; and the manufacturer obtains an additional profit, according as, with the same labour, he can sooner bring his goods to market.

As by collecting many hands in the same manufacture, the undertaker saves an actual expence, he also obtains a direct advantage by having it in his power to divide minutely, the several branches of labour among differ-

ent workmen, so that each acquires more skill and dexterity in the single branch allotted to him, and is prevented from idling, and losing time, as commonly happens in passing from one branch to another. The prodigious effect of this division of labour, by increasing the quantity of work done in a given time, as well as by improving its quality, becomes also, like every other circumstance tending to facilitate labour, a separate source of profit to the manufacturer*.

To the merchant, or tradesman, the circulating stock is the source of profit

* A part of the profit of a manufacturer may also be drawn from the workman, who, however, will have a full equivalent for what he thus resigns. By working to a master he is sure of constant employment, is saved the trouble of seeking out those who may have occasion for his labour, and avoids the anxiety arising from the danger of being thrown occasionally idle. In return for these advantages, he willingly relinquishes to his master some part of what he can earn while employed. Accordingly in Scotland, where it is still very common for good housewives to manufacture linens for the use of their families, the weavers whom they employ, usually demand wages somewhat higher than the ordinary rates paid by the manufacturers.

upon similar principles. It enables him to save the purchasers from the trouble and expence of bespeaking the goods before they stand in need of them, and of providing themselves at once with more than they immediately want; while the quantity which he has collected, and the number of his customers, ensure to him the disposal of the whole within a reasonable time. The larger the stock of the merchant, provided it does not exceed the general demand, the saving which he thus procures to his customers, without loss to himself, will be the more complete and certain.

With respect to *permanent* mercantile stock, consisting of the machinery, the houses, and the various accommodations employed by manufacturers or traders, in the course of their business, it is intended for the sole purpose of assisting and promoting the operations upon *circulating* stock; and having therefore, still further a tendency to shorten and facilitate labour, it must, upon that account, be also productive of a suitable profit.

It should seem, therefore, an evident conclusion from these observations, that the benefit resulting from every species of trade or manufacture, is ultimately derived from *labour*; and that the profit arising from every branch of mercantile stock, whether permanent or circulating, is derived from its enabling the merchant, or manufacturer, to produce the same effect with less labour, and consequently with less expence than would otherwise have been required.

It merits attention, however, that the whole revenue drawn by a merchant or manufacturer, though in a loose way commonly called his profit, does not with propriety come under this description. Besides the value of his capital, from its effect in shortening, facilitating, and superseding labour, he draws an adequate compensation for his own efforts in putting that capital in motion, for his attention and skill in conducting the several parts of the business, and for the inconvenience he may sustain in waiting a distant, and in some degree, an uncertain return. The former is properly

the *rent* of capital: the latter may be called the *wages* of mercantile exertion. These two branches of revenue are frequently separated, inasmuch as the merchant, or manufacturer, borrows a part of the capital with which he trades, and pays for it a regular *interest*, or as the acting partners of the commercial company draw salaries for their personal attendance.

Those who obtain a revenue from capital, therefore, are either monied men who live upon the interest of their money, or mercantile adventurers, who draw, either a profit from their own capital, or a sort of wages from trading with the capital of others. Both of these orders are much more independent in their circumstances than the common labourer: but the former according to the extent of his revenue, is more independent than the latter. The mercantile adventurer draws his revenue from a multiplicity of customers, with whom he is commonly upon equal terms of affluence, and to each of whom he is but little obliged; but the monied man lives entirely upon his

property, and is obliged to nobody for any part of his maintenance.

When we consider the changes in this respect, which have taken place in Britain since the period of the revolution; in what proportion both of these orders of capitalists have been multiplied; when we observe the number of common labourers who are daily converted into artificers, frequently vending their own productions; what crowds of people are continually rising from the lower ranks, and disposed of in the various branches of trade; how many have acquired, and how many more are in the high road of acquiring opulent fortunes; how universally mutual emulation, and mutual intercourse, have diffused habits of industry, have banished idleness, which is the parent of indigence, and have put it into the power of almost every individual, by the exertion of his own talents, to earn a comfortable subsistence; when, I say, we attend to the extent of these improvements, which affect the whole mercantile part of the inhabitants, we cannot entertain a doubt of their powerful

efficacy to propagate corresponding sentiments, of personal independence, and to instil higher notions of general liberty.

The observations which have been made, with respect to the trader and capitalist, are, in a great measure, applicable to the cultivator and proprietor of land. The farmer, who by his labour and skill, and by the employment of stock, draws a revenue from the cultivation of land, is in circumstances similar to those of the manufacturer. From his cattle, from his tools and instruments of husbandry, and from the money expended in the management of his farm, he derives a profit suitable to their effect, in shortening and facilitating his labour; and the ground itself may be regarded as a part of his permanent stock, contributing, like a loom, or other piece of machinery, to the result of his operations. But as the ground has greater stability, as it appears of much greater importance than all the remaining stock of the farmer, and as in many cases it belongs to a different person, the profit arising from it, which is regularly payable to the landlord, has been commonly

distinguished under the name of *rent*, while that which arises from the other part of agricultural stock, is viewed in the same light with mercantile profit. There is, however, no essential difference between those two branches of revenue; they both depend upon the same principles, and bear a regular proportion to the value of the respective funds from which they are drawn.

There is, indeed, one particular in which they require to be distinguished; I mean, with respect to the degree of independence which, in different situations, they bestow upon the possessor. In poor countries, where agriculture is in a low state, the great value of land, compared with the other parts of agricultural stock, renders the employment of the latter in a great measure subordinate to that of the former; and reduces the people who cultivate the ground to be a sort of servants or dependents of the proprietor. But the improvement of husbandry gives more dignity to this useful profession, and raises the condition of those who exercise it. As the operations of the

farmer become extensive, his capital must be enlarged; and as he lays out greater expence in improvement, he must obtain a longer lease to afford him the prospect of a return from the lands. He is thus totally emancipated from his former dependence; becomes more enterprising in proportion to his opulence; and upon the expiration of his lease, he finds that it is not more his object to obtain a good farm, than it is the interest of every landlord to obtain a good tenant. This has, for some time, been the general condition of the farmers in England; and to this independent state they are quickly advancing in the more improvable parts of Scotland.

Such are the changes which, in the course of the present century, have taken place, and are still rapidly advancing in Britain, with relation to the different branches of revenue, arising from the wages of labour, and from the employment of stock, either in trade, or in the cultivation of the earth; and with relation to the condition of the respective orders of men by whom those branches of revenue are enjoyed.

The tendency of improvement in all the arts of life, and in every trade or profession, has been uniformly the same; to enable mankind more easily to gain a livelihood by the exercise of their talents, without being subject to the caprice, or caring for the displeasure of others; that is, to render the lower classes of the people less dependent upon their superiors.

It must not, however, be imagined, that this independent situation of mankind, with respect to the means of subsistence, will always prevent such inequalities of fortune, as may create in some of the members of society an influence over others. The unequal distribution of property, is a necessary consequence of the different degrees of application or abilities, co-operating with numberless accidents, which retard or promote the pecuniary pursuits of individuals; and the poor will often find their account in courting the favour of the rich. Any attempt, upon the part of the public, to limit the free accumulation of wealth, would be fatal to that industry or exertion which is the foundation of national pros-

perity. Sound policy requires that every man should feel a continual spur to his activity from the prospect of enjoying at pleasure, and disposing of the fruits of his labour. But the circumstances of a country, highly advanced in commerce and manufactures, are such as, naturally, and without any interposition of government, have a tendency to moderate those great differences of fortune, which, in a rude age, are usually the source of tyranny and oppression. Where a multitude of people are engaged in lucrative trades and professions, it must commonly happen that numbers of competitors, placed in similar circumstances, will meet with nearly equal success; and that their several acquisitions will counterbalance each other, so as to prevent, in any one quarter, the growth of an influence that might be dangerous to the community. The same spirit, being universally, and in some measure equally diffused, and being subject to no obstruction, either from the state of society, or from the injudicious regulations of the public, is likely to form such a gradation of opulence, as leaving no

chasm from the top to the bottom of the scale, will occasion a continual approximation of the different ranks, and will frequently enable the inferior orders to press upon the superior. "The toe of the peasant "comes so near the heel of the courtier, "that it galls his kibe."

The effect of superiority in wealth, as I had occasion to shew in a former part of this discourse, is further diminished in commercial countries, by the frequent alienation of estates. As persons of low rank are incited by their situation to better their circumstances, and commonly acquire such habits of industry and frugality, as enable them to accumulate; those who are born to great fortunes, are apt, on the other hand, to become idle and dissipated, and living in all the expence which opulence renders fashionable, are frequently tempted to squander their estates. Hence, opulent families are quickly reduced to indigence; and their place is supplied by professional people from the lower orders; who, by the purchase of land, endeavour to procure that distinction which was the end of their

labours. The descendants of these upstarts, in a generation or two, usually go the same round of luxury and extravagance, and finally experience the same reverse of fortune. Property is thus commonly subjected to a constant rotation, which prevents it from conferring upon the owner the habitual respect and consideration, derived from a long continued intercourse between the poor and the rich.

To preserve old families from this destruction became a great object in Britain, and in the other countries of Europe, as soon as commerce began to threaten the dissolution of estates. Entails were invented to arrest and secure the estate; titles of nobility, to preserve the personal dignity of the possessor. But these contrivances were of little avail. When such restrictions became inconsistent with the manners of the age, they could no longer be enforced. In England the fetters of an entail were, by the ingenuity of lawyers, gradually lightened, and at length easily struck off; though in Scotland, a country in which aristocratic government was more firmly rooted, they still re-

main in full force. The rank of nobility being connected with political distinction, has hitherto maintained its ground, and continues to be the object of ambition; but when separated from the estate which gave it support, so far from being of service to the owner, it operates as an exclusion from almost all the paths of industry, and seems to confer a mock-dignity upon real and hopeless indigence and servility.

The opulence of Britain, in the present century, it is evident, has greatly surpassed that of the preceding ages, in facilitating to the poor the means of accumulation, in multiplying to the rich those artificial wants which produce a rapid circulation of estates, and consequently, in subverting that permanent state of property which is the foundation of all hereditary influence.

2. As the advancement of commerce and manufactures in Britain has produced a state of property highly favourable to liberty, so it has contributed to collect and arrange the inhabitants in a manner which enables them, with great facility, to combine in asserting their privileges.

When government has been so far established as to maintain the general tranquillity, and to introduce peaceable manners; and when a set of magistrates, and rulers, are invested with an authority, confirmed by ancient usage, and supported, perhaps, by an armed force; it cannot be expected that the people, single and unconnected, will be able to resist the oppression of their governors; and their power of combining for this purpose, must depend very much upon their peculiar circumstances. In small states, consisting merely of a capital city, with a narrow adjacent country, like those of ancient Greece and Rome, the inhabitants were necessarily led to an intimate union and correspondence; which appears to have been the chief cause of their being able, at an early period, to expel their petty princes, and establish a popular government. But in large kingdoms, the people being dispersed over a wide country, have seldom been capable of such vigorous exertions. Living in petty villages, at a distance from one another, and having very imperfect means of communication, they are often

but little affected by the hardships which many of their countrymen may sustain from the tyranny of government; and a rebellion may be quelled in one quarter before it has time to break out in another. The efforts, which are occasionally made, in different parts of the country, to limit the prerogative, being without union or concert, are commonly unsuccessful; and therefore, instead of producing the effect intended, usually terminate in the exaltation of the crown. The unlucky insurgents are obliged to make their peace with the sovereign, by submitting to new encroachments; and to wipe off their former demerits by assisting to reduce their fellow-citizens to obedience. To this want of concert in the members of a wide country, we may ascribe the rise of the greater part of rude monarchies; and more especially those of the great Asiatic nations.

From the progress, however, of trade and manufactures, the state of a country, in this respect, is gradually changed. As the inhabitants multiply from the facility of procuring subsistence, they are collected in

large bodies for the convenient exercise of their employments. Villages are enlarged into towns; and these are often swelled into populous cities. In all those places of resort, there arise large bands of labourers or artificers, who, by following the same employment, and by constant intercourse, are enabled, with great rapidity, to communicate all their sentiments and passions. Among these there spring up leaders, who give a tone and direction to their companions. The strong encourage the feeble; the bold animate the timid; the resolute confirm the wavering; and the movements of the whole mass proceed with the uniformity of a machine, and with a force that is often irresistible.

In this situation, a great proportion of the people are easily roused by every popular discontent, and can unite with no less facility in demanding a redress of grievances. The least ground of complaint, in a town, becomes the occasion of a riot; and the flames of sedition, spreading from one city to another, are blown up into a general insurrection.

Neither does this union arise merely from local situations; nor is it confined to the

lower class of those who are subservient to commerce and manufactures. By a constant attention to professional objects, the superior orders of mercantile people become quick-sighted in discerning their common interest, and, at all times, indefatigable in pursuing it. While the farmer, employed in the separate cultivation of his land, considers only his own individual profit; while the landed gentleman seeks only to procure a revenue sufficient for the supply of his wants, and is often unmindful of his own interest as well as of every other; the merchant, though he never overlooks his private advantage, is accustomed to connect his own gain with that of his brethren, and, is therefore, always ready to join with those of the same profession, in soliciting the aid of government, and in promoting general measures for the benefit of their trade.

The prevalence of this great mercantile association in Britain, has, in the course of the present century, become gradually more and more conspicuous. The clamour and tumultuary proceedings of the populace in the great towns are capable of penetrating

the inmost recesses of administration, of intimidating the boldest minister, and of displacing the most presumptuous favourite of the back-stairs. The voice of the mercantile interest, never fails to command the attention of government, and when firm and unanimous, is even able to controul and direct the deliberations of the national councils. The methods which are sometimes practised by ministry to divide this mercantile interest, and to divert its opposition to the measures of the crown, will fall more properly to be considered hereafter.

So much with regard to the progress of trade and manufactures in Britain, since the period of the revolution, and its consequences in rendering the people opulent, as well as independent in their circumstances. I shall now proceed to examine the tendency of this independence and opulence, to promote the cultivation of the liberal arts and sciences, to extend knowledge and literature over the great body of a people, and to introduce opinions and sentiments which may affect the nature of government.

ESSAY IV.

How far the Aavancement of Commerce and Manufactures has contributed to the Extension and Diffusion of Knowledge and Literature.

IT is natural to suppose that a proficiency in those practical arts, which multiply the necessaries and conveniencies of life will produce corresponding advances in general knowledge, and in the capacity of exercising the intellectual powers. Every practical art proceeds upon certain principles, discovered by experience and observation; and in the process of different arts there are numberless analogies and resemblances, which give rise to various deductions and conclusions, and thus, by a chain of reasoning, lead to new inventions and discoveries. The inexhaustible varieties of analogy and resemblance which occur in the objects around us, whether of art or nature, constitute the great

fund of general knowledge; and the faculty of discovering, and of arranging them, is justly regarded as the chief prerogative of the human understanding.

As the great wealth introduced by commerce and manufactures is, at the same time, very unequally divided, there springs up, of course, a numerous class of people, who, being born to affluent fortunes, are exempted from bodily labour, and who choosing to throw aside, in a great measure, the cares of business, indulge themselves in what is called pleasure. Being often destitute of that occupation which is necessary to preserve a relish for enjoyment, and without which the mind sinks into listless apathy and dejection, they seek amusement by artificial modes of occupying their imagination, in sports and diversions, in the collection and embellishment of those objects which are agreeable to the senses, and in those imitations and representations of nature which are calculated to excite admiration, wonder and surprise. Hence the introduction and improvement of the elegant and fine arts, which entertain us by the exhibition of what is grand, new

or beautiful, and which afford a delightful exercise to our taste, or a pleasing agitation of our passions.

The pursuits of mankind, however, are not limited to the objects of the common and mechanical, or of the elegant and fine arts. The first aim of every people is to procure subsistence; their next is to defend and secure their acquisitions. Men who live in the same society, or who have any intercourse with one another, are often linked together by the ties of sympathy and affection; as, on the other hand, they are apt, from opposite interests and passions, to dispute and quarrel, and to commit mutual injuries. From these different situations, they become sensible of the duties they owe to each other, and of the rights which belong to them in their various relations and capacities. A system of rules for enforcing those rights is gradually introduced, and the sciences of morality, of law, and of government, being more and more cultivated, give rise to a prodigious diversity of speculations and opinions. From the belief and the sentiments of mankind, in matters of

religion, there arises another science, not less intricate than the former, and which has proved even more fertile in disquisition and controversy. The remarkable appearances in the material world, the great changes in nature, the qualities and uses of the several productions of the earth; all these become in like manner, the subjects of attention and inquiry, and afford copious sources of knowledge and speculation.

While arts and sciences are thus advancing, they are gradually separated into different branches, each of which occupies the attention, and becomes the peculiar province of some individuals. The great branches of mechanical labour afford occupation to separate classes of workmen and artificers, who gain a livelihood by their peculiar employments; and according as every species of labour becomes more complicated, the separate classes of the people who derive a maintenance from it are further subdivided. A similar division follows of course in those elegant and fine arts which become the subject of lucrative employments; as in painting, sculpture, and music.

Even in the cultivation of the sciences, the circumstances of society have commonly occasioned a separation of certain learned professions; and directed, in some measure, the attention of numerous classes of men to particular dapartments of knowledge. The diseases and accidents by which health is impaired have given rise to the medical profession, with its respective divisions, connected with various branches of natural science. The disputes and quarrels among mankind, with the modes which have been found expedient for settling their contentions without having recourse to arms, the execution of the various deeds requisite for the security and transmission of property, and the direction of those observances and forms which, in most countries, are established for ascertaining and confirming pecuniary transactions; these branches of business have given employment to attornies and lawyers, whose profession leads them to become acquainted with the rules of justice, and with the whole system of legal proceedings. From the belief of a Deity, and the corresponding sentiments which it inspires, has

arisen the profession of the clergy; whose business it is to preside over the public acts of religious worship, and who are naturally entrusted with the office of instructing the people in the great duties of morality.

But even in those cases where particular sciences are not immediately connected with any profession, the progress of study and speculation will dispose individuals, according to their peculiar talents or disposition, to give different directions to their inquiries, and to separate the objects of their speculative pursuits.

There can be no doubt that this division in the labours, both of art and of science, is calculated for promoting their improvement. From the limited powers both of the mind and the body, the exertions of an individual are likely to be more vigorous and successful when confined to a particular channel, than when diffused over a boundless expanse. The athlete who limited his application to one of the gymnastic exercises, was commonly enabled to practice it with

more dexterity than he who studied to become a proficient in them all.

But though the separation of different trades and professions, together with the consequent division of labour and application in the exercise of them, has a tendency to improve every art or science, it has frequently an opposite effect upon the personal qualities of those individuals who are engaged in such employments. In the sciences, indeed, and even in the liberal arts, the application of those who follow particular professions can seldom be so much limited as to prove destructive to general knowledge. In all liberal occupations or scientific professions, there are certain principles to be studied by every person engaged in the practice; principles which admit of an extensive application to a variety of objects, and which, in many cases, cannot be properly applied without exercising the united powers of imagination and judgment. The practitioner, therefore, who is, in such cases, engrossed by the objects of his profession, may have an air of pedantry to those who

are occupied in different pursuits, but can seldom with justice be regarded as destitute of knowledge or of intellectual exertion. But the mechanical arts admit of such minute divisions of labour, that the workmen belonging to a manufacture are each of them employed, for the most part, in a single manual operation, and have no concern in the result of their several productions. It is hardly possible that these mechanics should acquire extensive information or intelligence. In proportion as the operation which they perform is narrow, it will supply them with few ideas; and according as the necessity of obtaining a livelihood obliges them to double their industry, they have the less opportunity or leisure to procure the means of observation, or to find topics of reflection from other quarters. As their employment requires constant attention to an object which can afford no variety of occupation to their minds, they are apt to acquire an habitual vacancy of thought, unenlivened by any prospects, but such as are derived from the future wages of their labour, or from the

grateful returns of bodily repose and sleep. They become, like machines, actuated by a regular weight, and performing certain movements with great celerity and exactness, but of small compass, and unfitted for any other use. In the intervals of their work, they can draw but little improvement from the society of companions, bred to similar employments, with whom, if they have much intercourse, they are most likely to seek amusement in drinking and dissipation.

It should seem, therefore, that in countries highly advanced in commerce and manufactures, the abilities and character of the labouring people, who form the great body of a nation, are liable to be affected by circumstances of an opposite nature. Their continual attention to the objects of their profession, together with the narrowness of those objects, has a powerful tendency to render them ignorant and stupid. But the progress of science and literature and of the liberal arts among the higher classes, must on the other hand contribute to enlighten the common people, and to spread a degree of the same improvements over the whole

community. There is in all mankind a disposition to admire and to imitate their superiors; and the fashions, opinions, and ways of thinking, adopted by men of high rank, are apt to descend very quickly to persons of inferior station. Whenever any branch of learning becomes extensively useful, those who have a common interest in attaining it, are enabled, by joining together, to hire an instructor at an expence moderate to individuals. Schools and seminaries of education are thus introduced, and they are sometimes promoted by the well-meant encouragement and protection of the public. By their industry different sorts of instruction are brought into a common market, are gradually cheapened by mutual competition, and, being more and more accommodated to the demands of society, become, as far as it is necessary, accessible even to the poor. Thus, in commercial countries, the important accomplishments of reading, writing, and accounting, are usually communicated at such easy rates, as to be within the reach of the lower orders.

The publication of books affords another medium for the circulation of knowledge, the benefit of which must extend, in some degree, to every member of the community. When, among persons in affluent circumstances, who are exempted from bodily labour, reading becomes a common amüsement, it is to be expected that their example in this, as in other things, will have an influence upon their inferiors; and, although the publications likely to fall into the hands of the common people will be such as are suited to their taste, and therefore, probably, not the best calculated for conveying instruction, they cannot fail to enlarge the imagination of the readers beyond mere professional objects, and even to communicate, perhaps, something of the opinions which prevail among the higher classes, upon the great popular topics of religion, morality, and government.

The effect of the cultivation proceeding from these different sources, is probably as remarkable at present, in Great Britain, as it has ever been in any commercial country, ancient or modern; but whether, upon the

whole, the artificial education thus communicated to the lower orders of the people, be sufficient to counterbalance the disadvantages of their natural situation, there may be good reason to doubt.

In ruder and more simple times, before labour is much subdivided, the whole stock of knowledge existing in a country will be scanty, but it will be more equally diffused over the different ranks, and each individual of the lower orders will have nearly the same opportunities and motives with his superiors, for exerting the different powers of his mind. The rude mechanic, residing in a small town, is forced to bestow his attention, successively, on many objects very different from each other. Not finding constant employment in one branch of manufacture, he exercises several, and furnishes himself with many of the tools requisite for each; he probably makes part of his own clothes, assists in building his own house and those of his neighbours, and cultivates, or directs his wife and children in cultivating, a small patch of ground, on which he raises part of his provisions. As he must

buy the materials, and sell or barter the produce of his labour, he is also, in some respects, a merchant; and, in this capacity, he is led to the observation of character, as well as to some speculation respecting the most advantageous times and places, for making his little bargains. When we add, that he is likewise trained to arms, for the purpose of assisting in defending the town of which he is a citizen, we must see that his situation, and consequently, his character, will be very different from that of a mechanic, in a more advanced society.

In this manner, all the members of a rude nation, being forced to exercise a great number of unconnected professions, and individually to provide for themselves, what each stands in need of, their attention is directed to a variety of objects; and their knowledge is extended in proportion. No man relies upon the exertions of his neighbour; but each employs, for the relief of his wants, or in defence of what belongs to him, either the strength of his body or the ingenuity of his mind, all the talents which he has been able to acquire, all the faculties

with which nature has endowed him. By experience, therefore, he learns to conduct himself in many different situations, to guard against the dangers to which he is exposed, and to extricate himself from the difficulties and embarrassments in which he may be involved. Unlike the mechanics of a commercial nation, who have each permitted all their talents, except in single and peculiar branches, to lie dormant and useless, but who combine, like the wheels of a machine, in producing a complicated system of operations; the inhabitants of a rude country have separately preserved, and kept in action, all the original powers of man, but in their united capacity, and as members of a community, they have added very little to the independent efforts of every individual.

If we compare the mechanics of different commercial states, we shall probably find that the respective degrees of their knowledge and intellectual attainments correspond with the foregoing observation. In England, and in the other mercantile countries of Europe, it is believed, that, in pro-

portion to the advancement of manufactures, the common people have less information, and less curiosity upon general topics; less capacity, beyond the limits of their own employment, of entering into conversation, or of conducting, with propriety and dexterity, the petty transactions which accident may throw in their way.

This is perhaps the chief foundation of the common remark, which is made by the English, concerning the superior sagacity and cunning of their neighbours in the northern part of the island. As in Scotland commerce and manufactures have made less progress than in England, the great body of the people have not acquired the same habits of industry, nor are they so much engrossed by narrow mechanical employments. The man, therefore, has not been so entirely stripped of his mental powers, and converted into the mere instrument of labour. As the same individual often follows a greater variety of occupations, his understanding is more exercised, and his wits are more sharpened, by such different attentions. He is more capable of turning his hand to all

kinds of work, but he is much less a proficient in any. In the lower orders of society, where there are fewer restraints from education, it may be expected, that, in proportion as the people are more intelligent and quick-sighted, they will be more apt, in their mutual intercourse, to have their private interest in view, as well as to be more artful and subtle in pursuing it*.

Even in the same country, there is a sensible difference between different professions; and, according as every separate employment gives rise to a greater subdivision of workmen and artificers, it has a greater tendency to withdraw from them the means of intellectual improvement. The business of agriculture, for example, is less capable of a minute subdivision of labour than the greater part of mechanical employments. The same workman has often occasion to plough,

* The inhabitants of the southern counties in Scotland have applied the same remark to those parts of the country which are still further behind in commercial improvements; and they have introduced a proverbial expression to that purpose: they say, "a person is too "far north, that we should venture to have dealings "with him."

to sow, and to reap; to cultivate the ground for different purposes, and to prepare its various productions for the market. He is obliged alternately to handle very opposite tools and instruments; to repair, and even sometimes, to make them for his own use; and always to accommodate the different parts of his labour to the change of the seasons and to the variations of the weather. He is employed in the management and rearing of cattle, becomes frequently a grazier and a corn-merchant, and is unavoidably initiated in the mysteries of the horse-jockey. What an extent of knowledge, therefore, must he possess! What a diversity of talents must he exercise, in comparison with the mechanic, who employs his whole labour in sharpening the point, or in putting on the head of a pin! How different the education of those two persons! The pin-maker, who commonly lives in a town, will have more of the fashionable improvements of society than the peasant; he will undoubtedly be better dressed; he will, in all probability, have more book-learning, as well as less coarseness in the

tone of his voice, and less uncouthness in his appearance and deportment. Should they both be enamoured of the same female, it is natural to suppose, that he would make the better figure in the eyes of his mistress, and that he would be most likely to carry the prize. But in a bargain, he would, assuredly, be no match for his rival. He would be greatly inferior in real intelligence and acuteness; much less qualified to converse with his superiors, to take advantage of their foibles, to give a plausible account of his measures, or to adapt his behaviour to any peculiar and unexpected emergency.

The circumstance now mentioned affords a view not very pleasant in the history of human society. It were to be wished that wealth and knowledge should go hand in hand, and that the acquisition of the former should lead to the possession of the latter. Considering the state of nations at large, it will, perhaps be found that opulence and intellectual improvements are pretty well balanced, and that the same progress in commerce and manufactures which occa-

sions an increase of the one, creates a proportional accession of the other. But, among individuals, this distribution of things is far from being so uniformly established; and, in the lower orders of the people, it appears to be completely reversed. The class of mechanics and labourers, by far the most numerous in a commercial nation, are apt, according as they attain more affluent and independent circumstances, to be more withdrawn and debarred from extensive information; and are likely, in proportion as the rest of the community advance in knowledge and literature, to be involved in a thicker cloud of ignorance and prejudice. Is there not reason to apprehend, that the common people, instead of sharing the advantages of national prosperity, are thus in danger of losing their importance, of becoming the dupes of their superiors, and of being degraded from the rank which they held in the scale of society?

The separation of a whole people into two great classes, of which the one was distinguished by knowledge and intelligence,

the other by the opposite qualities, occurred very remarkably over a great part of Europe, in what are called the dark-ages. A very numerous clergy, who had engrossed all the learning of the times, and whose understandings were whetted by an interested and incessant activity, formed the one class. The laity, comprehending the military people, continually engaged in war and depredation, and the peasantry, reduced to the state of villainage, both equally sunk in ignorance and superstition, composed the other. In consequence of this unfortunate arrangement, the ministers of a religion which taught men to renounce all considerations of worldly interest, taking advantage of their superior talents, and uniting in a system of deep-laid fraud and deception, persuaded their simple flock to resign so great a proportion of their possessions, and to submit to a series of such extensive encroachments, as at length established an ecclesiastical tyranny, which the efforts of more than two centuries of diffusive science and philosophy, have hardly been able to overturn.

But although commerce and manufactures have, in like manner, a tendency to form two distinct and separate classes of the learned and the ignorant, there is no reason to suspect that the former will abuse their superiority, by perverting it to the hurt or detriment of the latter. It is plainly the interest of the higher ranks to assist in cultivating the minds of the common people, and in restoring to them that knowledge which they may be said to have sacrificed to the general prosperity. A certain degree of information and intelligence, of acquaintance with the good or bad consequences which flow from different actions and systems of behaviour, is necessary for suggesting proper motives to the practice of virtue, and for deterring mankind from the commission of crimes. It surely is of the utmost consequence to the public, that men in the lower orders should be sober and industrious, honest and faithful, affectionate and conscientious in their domestic concerns, peaceable in their manners, and adverse from riot and disorder. But how can it be expected that they will persevere in the

practice of the various duties incumbent upon them, unless they have acquired habits of observation and reflection; unless they have been taught to set a high value upon character and reputation, and are able to discover that such a conduct is no less conducive to their own interest, than to that of others? To render them useful in their several relations, either as men or citizens, it is requisite that they should be in a condition to form a proper estimate of the objects which will promote their true happiness, to detect those false appearances which might frequently mislead them, and to guard against the errors in religion, morality, or government, which designing men may endeavour to propagate. The doctrine maintained by some politicians, that the ignorance of the labouring people is of advantage, by securing their patience and submission under the yoke which their unequal fortune has imposed upon them, is no less absurd, than it is revolting to all the feelings of humanity. The security derived from so mean a source is temporary and fallacious. It is liable to be undermined by the intrigues

of any plausible projector, or suddenly overthrown by the casual breath of popular opinion.

As the circumstances of commercial society are unfavourable to the mental improvements of the populace, it ought to be the great aim of the public to counteract, in this respect, the natural tendency of mechanical employments, and by the institution of schools and seminaries of education, to communicate, as far as possible, to the most useful, but humble class of citizens, that knowledge which their way of life has, in some degree, prevented them from acquirin. It is needless to observe, how imperfect such institutions have hitherto been. The principal schools and colleges of Europe have been intended for the benefit merely of the higher orders; and even for this purpose, the greater part of them are not very judiciously modelled. But men of rank and fortune, and in general those who are exempted from bodily labour, have little occasion, in this respect, for the aid of the public, and perhaps would be better supplied, if left, in a great measure, to their own

exertions. The execution, however, of a liberal plan for the instruction of the lower orders, would be a valuable addition to those efforts for the maintenance of the poor, for the relief of the diseased and infirm, and for the correction of the malefactor, which have proceeded from the humanity and public spirit of the present age. The parish schools in Scotland, are the only extensive provisions of that nature hitherto known in the island; and though it must be confessed that they are but ill calculated for the purposes of general education, the advantages resulting from them, even in their present state, have been distinctly felt, and very universally acknowledged.

ESSAY V.

The Separation of the different Branches of Knowledge; and the Division of the liberal Arts and of the Sciences.

TO explain the political changes, arising in commercial countries, from the progress of liberal education, it may be proper that we should examine more particularly the principal branches of knowledge which are likely to be cultivated, and to consider how far they will probably influence the opinions, the character, and manners of society.

Without entering into any speculation concerning the separate existence of spiritual and corporeal substances, we may observe, that all the objects of knowledge appear naturally to reduce themselves into two great classes; the one relating to the operations of thought and intelligence; the other, to the qualities and operations of inanimate matter.

Men are disposed more easily and readily to survey the corporeal objects around them than to direct their attention to the operations of their own thinking faculties. The study of inanimate nature, or physics, was accordingly the first branch of philosophy, upon which the sages of antiquity employed themselves, and upon which, after the revival of letters, any considerable progress was made. It extended to the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, and to the most remarkable changes produced upon this earth; and it led to an examination of all such natural objects as are calculated to excite admiration or peculiar attention; of the winds and the tides, of thunder and lightning; of the properties of air, of water, of fire, of electricity, of magnetism.

While mere curiosity excited mankind to an examination of the most remarkable changes and appearances upon the great theatre of the universe, an application to the practical arts of life called them to a more minute investigation of particular objects. The employment of curing diseases and wounds produced an attentive enquiry into

the medical virtues of plants and minerals. The progress of manufactures led to the discovery of the mechanical powers, and to the combination of these in the construction of machines. The vain attempts of an ignorant age to accomplish the transmutation of metals, and the prolongation of life beyond its natural boundaries, gradually suggested many wonderful effects of heat and mixture, and at length produced the modern science of chemistry, which after incurring the ridicule that might be expected from its original pretensions, has made such progress in compounding and analysing the different parts of matter as to be rendered equally subservient to the improvement of the arts, and to the progress of agreeable speculation.

As the several bodies, which were thus to be examined in a variety of lights, became gradually more numerous and complex, the advantage of arranging and reducing them into classes, was proportionally more apparent, and gave rise to the science of natural history with its different subdivisions.

In the investigation of all the general laws of nature, and in many of the practical

arts, it is often requisite to enumerate and compare the number, the magnitude, and the figure of different bodies; whence the sciences of geometry and calculation, which contain the conclusions deducible from such relations, were introduced, and applied to all the branches of natural and mechanical knowledge.

Such are the principal branches of science relating to corporeal objects. The sciences founded upon the operation of our mental faculties may be divided into three great classes, in each of which there is room for many subdivisions.

The good or bad behaviour of those who live in society with us, their virtues and vices, cannot fail very early to excite our attention, and to interest our feelings; while we soon perceive that these persons exercise a similar judgment upon us; and this leads us to reflect upon our own conduct, and to regard our own actions in the light in which they appear to others. The speculations, together with the practical rules and observations, arising from this important view of

society, form the science of ethics, or morality.

To account for the uncommon events which occur in the affairs of this world, or for the revolutions which happen in the state of natural objects, mankind, in reasoning by analogy, from experience of the movements and changes produced by themselves, have had recourse, almost universally, to the agency of superior beings, possessed of intelligence and powers resembling, but superior in degree to the human. From a belief in the existence of such beings, and from the consideration of their peculiar relations to ourselves, together with that of their capacity or disposition of doing us good or harm, has arisen the science of religion, comprehending a system of religious opinions and duties.

Beside those emotions and passions which lay a foundation for morality and religion, and which appear essential to the comfortable existence of man in the social state, there are other mental operations which contribute to adorn and embellish human society by increasing its elegant enjoyments. These

are the effects of what is beautiful or sublime, either in art or nature; from which are derived the pleasures of taste, and what are called the fine arts. In all these arts, the practical rules give rise to an investigation of the principles upon which they are founded, and to a scientific deduction of the pleasures which are produced from their different sources, and thus the art and the science are made, in each case, to accompany one another; and the pleasure derived from the senses is heightened by an agreeable exercise of the understanding.

As, in these different views, the powers exerted by intelligent beings are highly interesting, as they are numerous, and wonderfully diversified, separated from each other by slender and almost imperceptible boundaries, and frequently combined in producing results which cannot easily be traced to their respective causes, it soon became an important object, to enumerate and to arrange the various operations of our thinking principle, to analyze them, to compare them together, and to discover their several relations. These investigations have been ap-

plied, though perhaps with little success, not only to man, but also to superior, and even to inferior orders of intelligence. Hence, the science of metaphysics, which may be regarded as auxiliary and subordinate to morality, religion, and the fine arts, and which, in the sciences founded upon the effects of our various mental exertions, appears to hold the same place, that is held by natural history in the sciences relating to corporeal objects.

With respect to the two great branches of science, of which an outline has been suggested, it must be admitted that natural philosophy and the several sciences connected with it, have no immediate effect in extending or improving our ideas with relation to government; further than as all the different branches of knowledge co-operate in dispelling prejudices, in strengthening the intellectual powers, and in promoting an ardent zeal in the discovery of truth. It merits attention, however, that the advancement of natural knowledge, in all its branches, is highly subservient to the improvement of the common arts of life, and consequently, by promoting opu-

lence and independence in the great body of a people, must contribute, in proportion, to inspire them with sentiments of liberty. To enable the inferior ranks to gain an easy subsistence by their labour is to lay the best foundation of popular government.

The exercise of the practical arts can hardly fail to suggest an investigation of the general principles upon which they are founded, and to produce discoveries which may be useful, in facilitating the different kinds of labour, or in penetrating the secret operations of nature. It seems reasonable to suppose, therefore, that such improvements as take their origin from the higher class of artisans, or from professional men who have had the advantage of a liberal education, would meet with the greatest encouragement in Britain, where manufactures have, for a century past, been more successfully cultivated than in any other part of Europe, and where, of course, a more extensive market has been provided for every profitable invention. Whether this market has been occasionally supplied by natives, or by foreigners,

invited into the country by the prospect of emolument, is of little importance.

Those improvements, on the contrary, which are the fruits of mere leisure and curiosity, and which afford occupation to the speculative philosopher, have perhaps, of late, been more successfully cultivated in some other European countries. The great genius of Newton, indeed, about a century ago, produced in this island a rapid advancement of true philosophy; while the high reputation of Des Cartes, in France, gave an unlucky bias to his countrymen, and disposed them to adopt his erroneous and chimerical doctrines. But though natural philosophy was thus retarded, it came at length to be more cultivated in France, and in some other parts of Europe, than in Britain; because, from the despotical government in those countries, the inhabitants were, in some measure, debarred from the more generally interesting enquiries upon religion, morality, and politics, and were confined in their speculations, either to matters of taste, and abstracted speculation, or to those de-

pending on the nature and operations of corporeal objects. Their exertions, therefore, have been the more conspicuous in that particular sphere to which they were limited; and in mathematical learning, in the several branches of physics, in chemistry, and in natural history, it should seem that their superior proficiency can hardly be disputed.

It cannot, however, escape the observation of those who attend to the history of literature, that, in most countries, after philosophical researches have made a certain progress, they commonly verge more and more to the pursuits of natural knowledge. To be satisfied of this, we need only consult the memoirs of those literary societies, in the different parts of Europe, which have been lately published. As that species of philosophy excited the earliest attention of mankind, so it appears calculated to arrest the curiosity of the most numerous class, in those ages when learning has arrived at full maturity. In our enquiries concerning the faculties and operations of the human mind, it soon becomes difficult to add to the stock of knowledge already acquired, or to exhi-

bit such views and reasonings as will contain much novelty or entertainment. It even requires peculiar acuteness and discernment, in treating of those intricate subjects, to attain clear and distinct conceptions of what is already known, and to explain in a manner sufficiently intelligible, the opinions of preceding philosophers. But the study of external nature, at least in many of its branches, requires no more than common understanding, with an ardent curiosity and perseverance of application. Every man who with the power of devising new experiments can submit to the patient examination of the contents of a crucible; he who can observe the several parts of a plant and assign it its proper place in a general system of classification, or who having made new and accurate enquiries into the economy of animals, can faithfully report and clearly explain the result of his enquiries; every such person is capable of increasing our knowledge of nature, and of acquiring some degree of literary reputation. We need not be surprised, therefore, that those branches of science, which are adapted to the capacity of the

greatest number, and in which the labours of mankind are most likely to be requited with suitable proficiency and information, should be most universally pursued, and become the most popular.

In our present enquiry it would be improper to enter into any further detail concerning the divisions of natural knowledge, which are so remotely connected with the political state of the nation. But in exhibiting a view of the changes in the tide of popular opinions which have taken place during the present century, it seems requisite to examine more particularly the sciences which immediately relate to the faculties and operations of the mind, and to consider how far the progress of speculation, and discussion, in matters of morality, religion, or taste, have influenced the sentiments of the people with relation to government.

ESSAY VI.

The Effects of Commerce and Manufactures, and of Opulence and Civilization, upon the Morals of a People.

THAT the dispositions and behaviour of man are liable to be influenced by the circumstances in which he is placed, and by his peculiar education and habits of life, is a proposition which few persons will be inclined to controvert. But how far this influence reaches, and what differences are to be found between the morals of rude and of civilized nations, it is not so easy to determine. The fact, I believe, has been seldom examined with that impartiality and deliberation which its importance requires. Moral and religious writers have usually thought proper to treat the subject in the style of satire and invective, and in declaiming against the vices of their own times, have been led to exalt the merit of distant

ages. A late celebrated author *, possessed of uncommon powers of eloquence, has gone so far as to maintain, first in a popular discourse, and afterwards in a long serious dissertation, that the rude and savage life is the parent of all the virtues, the vices of mankind being the proper and peculiar offspring of opulence and civilization.

Instead of combating, or of criticising such paradoxical opinions, it is proposed to examine the effects of poverty and riches, of simplicity and refinement, upon practical morality; and to compare the predominant virtues and vices of the different periods of society. We shall thence be enabled to discover the influence which the commercial improvements of Great Britain have had upon the moral character of the nation, and how far this influence has affected the political state of the people.

It should seem that the most remarkable differences, exhibited in the manners of polished and of barbarous nations, relate to

* Rousseau.

the virtues of courage and fortitude, of sobriety and temperance, of justice and generosity.

SECTION I

Of Courage and Fortitude.

COURAGE and fortitude are virtues, which, though resembling each other in some of the principal features, are easily and clearly distinguished. They are called forth on different occasions; and they do not always exist in the same persons. Courage consists in a steady resolution of submitting to some great evil, which being future, is in some measure uncertain, and takes the name of danger. Fortitude consists in bearing a present pain or uneasiness with firmness and resignation. Courage supposes an active and voluntary exertion: Fortitude, a mere passive suffering. The exertion of courage is opposed and often prevented by the passion of fear, which magnifies and exaggerates all uncertain evils. The exercise of forti-

tude is counteracted by that weakness of mind which destroys the power of reflection, and renders us incapable of counterbalancing our present pain, by the recollection of any agreeable circumstance in our condition. Great calamities, and such as are of a personal nature, seem to be the objects of courage; and the most conspicuous triumph of this virtue appears in conquering the fear of death. But fortitude may frequently be displayed in supporting the long continuance of small as well as of great evils; in suffering ridicule, shame, and disappointments, and in submitting with patience and alacrity to the numerous train of vexations "which flesh is heir to."

Both courage and fortitude are promoted by every circumstance which leads to the exercise of those virtues; for here, as in all other cases, men are, by the power of habit, inured to such exertions and sufferings as at first were formidable and difficult.

In another view, those two virtues are improved by opposite circumstances. A man is excited to expose himself to danger, from

the consideration that his neighbours are attentive to his conduct; and that, entering with lively sensibility into his feelings, they will applaud and admire him for his courage, or undervalue and despise him for the want of it. He who fights a duel, upon some trifling punctilio, is instigated to make that exertion, not by the value of the object, which has produced the quarrel, but from a sense of honour; a desire of maintaining the good opinion of others, and of avoiding contempt and disgrace. In all the exertions of courage, it will be found that this forms a weighty consideration; and in many, that it becomes the principal motive.

Our fortitude, on the other hand, is improved by the want of humanity, and is diminished by the exquisite fellow-feeling of those who live with us. In our afflictions, the commiseration and sympathy of our intimate friends awakens our own sensibility to our distress, betrays us into unavailing lamentations, and makes us give way to all the weakness of sorrow and despondency. But in the company of our distant acquaint-

ance, we are ashamed of such tenderness, we exert ourselves to restrain and to conceal our emotions; if we are able to command our thoughts, we endeavour to suggest indifferent subjects of conversation, and to prevent any expression from escaping us which may be disgusting or disagreeable to those with whom we converse. By thus adapting our behaviour to the general standard of the people around us, we acquire habits, either of indulgence or of restraint. If our companions are kind and affectionate, attentive to our distresses, and eager to relieve them, we are encouraged to lean upon their sympathy and assistance; and losing the firmness and vigiour of our minds become unable to stand, alone and unmoved, amid the various trials with which we may be visited. Should we happen, on the contrary, to be cast in the society of persons who are cold and indifferent, "unused to the melting mood," we become proportionably shy and reserved, disdaining, by our complaints, to solicit that pity which we are not likely to obtain, and learning to endure, without repining, and without

shrinking, whatever afflictions may befal us. By the continuance of such efforts, we attain more and more the command of our passions, and are enabled to moderate our sensibility to painful or uneasy impressions*.

According as any person is placed, more or less, in either of those two situations, we may commonly observe, in this respect, a suitable difference of temper and disposition. The child who is constantly indulged by his foolish parents, and taught to expect that every body should run to serve him, is perpetually fretful and peevish, crying at whatever happens to cross his inclination, and keeping the whole family disturbed; while his brother, perhaps, who, from unaccountable caprice, has the good fortune to be a little neglected, becomes hardy and manly, patient under disappointments, and pleased with every attention that is paid to him.

There are many persons whom a long illness, and the constant care of their relations, have reduced to the situation of spoiled children, who are put out of humour by

* Theory of Moral Sentiments.

the slightest trifles, are continually wearying their hearers with the dismal catalogue of their complaints, and expect that nobody about them should have any other object but to anticipate their wants.

Many individuals of the female sex, who are, perhaps, advanced in years, or subject to personal infirmities or disadvantages, are apt, on the other hand, to meet with so little attention and sympathy as forces them to endure, in silence and solitude, many of the troubles and vexations of life, and frequently teaches them to submit to their lot, not only with patience and equanimity, but with chearfulness and heroic resignation. If the men have more courage, the women, undoubtedly, are distinguished by superior fortitude.

Considering the general effect of the progress of arts and civilization upon these virtues, it should seem that the circumstances of mankind, in the infancy of society, are more favourable to fortitude than to courage. A savage, who is exposed to many dangers, and who is obliged to un-

dergo many hardships and calamities, becomes, no doubt, in some degree familiar with both, and is rendered constitutionally intrepid, as well as insensible to pain or uneasiness. But though he is not much restrained by the influence of fear, he is little prompted to the exertions of courage by the prospect of procuring admiration or applause from his neighbours; for his neighbours are too much engrossed by their own sufferings to feel much for those of others; while, on the other hand, his patience and constancy under afflictions are confirmed and strengthened by the knowledge that any expression of weakness, instead of obtaining the consolation of sympathy, would expose him to contempt and derision. Savage nations, therefore, in all parts of the world, are said to be cowardly and treacherous. If they can accomplish their end by indirect means, they never make an open attempt upon their enemies. They fight, not from the love of glory, but to gain the advantage of victory, or to gratify a vindictive spirit. They cover their

resentment under the mask of friendship; and never seem to harbour malice, till they are prepared to strike.

Their heroic fortitude is universally known. Amid the severest tortures, they disdain to utter a groan; and no artifice can tempt them to betray the secrets which they have an interest to conceal.

The first considerable advancement in the arts, which procure subsistence, by pasturing cattle, and by cultivating the ground, has an evident tendency to improve the virtue of courage. From the greater facility of procuring the necessaries of life, men are collected in larger societies; and by finding their own situation more comfortable, they have greater encouragement to indulge and cultivate their social feelings. Different tribes, who happen to be in the same neighbourhood, are almost continually quarelling and fighting; and as the members, not only of the same, but of opposite parties, become known to each other, they of course become rivals in their martial exploits, and by their mutual emulation acquire a high sense of military honour. The Arabs, and Scythians,

or Tartars, the ancient Gauls and Germans, the Gothic tribes who laid the foundation of the modern states of Europe, are all eminent examples of the courage and martial spirit which the pastoral and agricultural ages are wont to inspire. The modern European nations carried those virtues to a still higher pitch; as they continued longer in that situation which gave full scope to the hostilities of neighbouring tribes, and felt more extensively, among different petty societies, that emulation and rivalship which implanted the love of military glory. Their martial spirit at the same time, acquired a peculiar direction, which introduced, among the gentry, an artificial standard of merit, and fantastic modes of behaviour, inconsistent, in some respects, with the dictates of morality. The institutions and customs of chivalry, which arose from that state of things, and of which there are several vestiges remaining at this day, I had formerly occasion to consider.

The improvement of commerce and manufactures, together with that opulence which flows from it, must be productive, it is evident, of great alterations, with respect

to the virtues both of courage and fortitude. By the establishment of regular government, a natural consequence of civilization, mankind are protected from depredation, and those nations who cultivate the arts find it their interest, on ordinary occasions, to avoid mutual hostilities, and to maintain an amicable correspondence. Their modes of life, therefore, which become totally different from those of a rude people, give rise to different habits. Living at ease, and in a state of tranquillity, and engaged in the exercise of peaceable professions, they become averse from every enterprise that may expose them to danger, or subject them to pain and uneasiness. The more secure and comfortable their situation at home, they have the less inclination to exchange it, for the hazards of a campaign, or for the fatigues and hardships with which it may be attended.

The lively sensibility and exquisite fellow-feeling which, in opulent and polished nations, take place among individuals, are, at the same time, peculiarly unfavourable to

fortitude. He who, in his distress, meets with indulgence from others, is encouraged to indulge himself. Instead of struggling to repress the appearance of affliction, from an apprehension of incurring contempt or indignation, he gives way to its movements with a view of obtaining the friendly consolation of sympathy. Instead of smothering his feelings by an attempt to conceal them, he awakens and rouses them by an ostentatious display of their magnitude. Thus in a polished nation, people take the advice of the poet, "not to pull their hat upon their brows, but to give their sorrow words." They become loud and clamourous in their grief; and are more desirous of shewing, that they feel with delicacy and vivacity, than that they can bear their misfortunes with firmness and constancy. But it may be supposed, that the same lively sensibility and fellow-feeling, by inspiring a nicer sense of honour, will improve the virtue of courage. By a more intimate communication among the members of society, the manners of mankind are softened, their social dispositions are awakened, and they

feel more and more an attraction which leads them to conform their behaviour to the general standard. It may be expected, therefore, that they will be so much the more excited to exertions which, though hazardous, will be rewarded with universal approbation and applause.

But it merits attention, that the standard of approbation in this respect, is apt to vary from this change of situation. In proportion as men live in greater security, and are seldom employed in fighting, they are likely to lower their estimation of military talents, and to exalt the value of such other accomplishments as, in the ordinary state of society, are found more useful. From the customs of chivalry, indeed, introduced in a former period, certain punctilios of military honour have been transmitted to the present European nations, and are still held indispensibly necessary. Persons of rank and education of what are called gentlemen must expose their lives, rather than tamely suffer an affront. But these punctilios have been artificially preserved from the force of long usage; they are plainly contrary to the

manners of a commercial people, and in the more civilized parts of Europe appear to be daily losing ground. To be forward in seeking occasions to fight a duel, is now generally censured even by those who think it necessary to submit to the custom, or who admit the principles upon which it is understood to be founded.

Independent of this exception, which is restricted to persons of a particular description, and among the greater part of whom it is retained from the tyranny of old custom, the virtue of courage appears, in all the nations of modern Europe, to have declined in proportion to their advancement in commerce and manufactures. The first remarkable effect of this decline was to make the great body of the people discard the military service, and devolve the burden of national defence upon soldiers by profession, gathered promiscuously from the community at large. This practice was introduced by the earliest mercantile countries, and was gradually adopted by others, who followed in the career of commercial improvement. Though

it was generally, we may suppose, agreeable to the sovereign, upon whom it bestowed the chief direction of the military force, it could not fail, for the same reason, to excite an alarm upon the part of the people, who found their liberties and rights at the disposal of a set of mercenaries, raised and maintained by their chief magistrate. But whatever patriotic measures have been taken in some of those countries, for supporting a national militia, to serve as a counterpoise to the standing army, the difficulty of enforcing regulations of this nature, so as to derive much advantage from them, must afford sufficient evidence that they are adverse to the spirit of the times. We may even observe, in the nations most engrossed by trade, a tendency to employ foreign mercenaries, either by hiring to fight their battles the troops of poor states, or subsidizing their sovereigns, and admitting them as nominal allies.

The courage of the mercenary armies of Europe is maintained by discipline; that is, by habits of fighting, and by that *esprit du corps*, which brings home to the breast of

each individual a sense of military honour. Art is thus made to supply the deficience of natural circumstances; for men who have undertaken the trade of a soldier must be sensible, that perpetual disgrace will be the punishment of their cowardice; and after being seasoned by a campaign or two, they are commonly able, in the company of one another, to surmount the timidity contracted by their former way of life.

The effect of military discipline is probably greater or less, according to the advances which nations have made in civilization. The armies of a refined and polished people, are likely to acquire from their profession an extreme sensibility to martial reputation, and an enthusiastic ardour to distinguish themselves by their spirited atchievements. Those of a nation but lately emerged from a state of rudeness, will be more apt to possess that constitutional intrepidity, which enables them to remain unshaken and immoveable in the midst of danger, and which disposes them to be contented with a bare obedience to the command of their leaders. The French armies

afford a striking pattern of the first; the Russian a good example of the second, The former are animated with feelings which are calculated to interest us. The latter are merely a powerful instrument.

The decay of the military spirit in the modern commercial nations, has produced a corresponding degradation of the military profession. Among the Romans, and other celebrated nations of antiquity, the only reputable employment seems to have been that of a soldier. The same ideas prevailed, and were even carried to a higher pitch, among our forefathers, in modern Europe: among them, every free man followed the profession of arms, and all other professions were exercised only by slaves. In France there were strong vestiges of these ideas, remaining at the time of the late revolution. A merchant was not a gentleman, and might, by any person of that rank, be affronted with impunity. A physician was nearly in the same predicament. The lawyers, or *long robe*, were in a sort of middle station, between the gentry and commonalty; as who should say half-gentlemen.

The glory attached to superior skill and conduct in war, was of a piece with the exalted notions entertained of the military character. The highest place in the temple of Fame has been commonly assigned to an Alexander, or a Cæsar; though the one was little more, perhaps, than a daring madman, and the other was a profligate, utterly destitute of principle, who destroyed the liberties of his country.

But commerce has at length introduced other notions of personal merit, and taught people to estimate professions by a different scale. Dr. Swift defines a soldier to be "a "Yahoo, hired to kill as many of his fellow-"creatures, who have never offended him, "as he possibly can." This definition is, doubtless, loose and declamatory. A soldier is understood to be hired for the defence of his country, and the professed end of his appointment is laudable. Nor can it with reason be asserted, that the people whom he has undertaken to kill, have never offended him; for they are the enemies of his country, who, though they never injured him in

particular, may be considered as the objects of his just resentment.

But though the killing of our enemies may be vindicated from its necessity, it will not thence follow that the performance of this public duty is a desirable service. It is a painful task, barely reconcileable to strict justice, and of which the execution is disgusting to humanity.

It must, at the same time, be taken into consideration, that men who engage for hire in the military profession, are not permitted to call in question the justice of those wars in which they may be employed. To refuse to obey orders, would be mutiny; and to do this in a service of danger, would infer the imputation of cowardice. It is evident, however, that, in every war, the half of those professional men must be fighting in support of injustice; for of two hostile nations, who have resolved to determine their quarrel by the sword, one only can be in the right. But it may easily happen that both should be in the wrong. The greater part of the wars in which nations are engaged, proceed, in reality, from the fault

of both parties: they proceed from the avarice, or ambition of princes, or their ministers, who, from motives of private interest, and upon false pretences, embroil their respective states in frivolous and groundless disputes, and scruple not, with unbounded profusion, to waste their blood and their treasure. A mercenary army is often the blind agent of a minister, employed in the most mischievous part of the dirty work, which he finds requisite for the preservation of his power.

As far as Britain has surpassed other European countries in commerce and manufactures, her inhabitants appear to have declined more conspicuously in their martial dispositions, and in their admiration of military talent. They are more invariably occupied, than most of their neighbours, in those peaceable arts, which require a patient persevering industry, but no exertion of courage. They are most engrossed by gainful pursuits, which present a continual prospect of accumulation, but which would be totally frustrated by a temporary desertion, for the purpose of engaging in military

operations. Above all, their superior opulence tends to discourage any enterprise that is likely to be attended with danger and uncertainty. "Let him go fight," says the soldier of Lucullus, "who has lost his purse." The man who is poor is incited to desperate adventures by the consideration that he has much to gain, and little or nothing to lose. He who is rich is in the opposite circumstances. The fall from his present fortune to beggary would occasion more misery, than the rise to any fortune which he can expect to acquire would add to his happiness. Common prudence, therefore, seems to require, that he should hazard nothing, that he should be cautious in retaining an existence which admits of so many comforts, and be careful to preserve that brittle thread of life, upon which all his enjoyments depend.

In examining how far these peculiar circumstances have rendered the inhabitants of this island less warlike than their neighbours, there is no question concerning our fleets and armies. The valour and steadiness of mercenary troops depends upon their discipline; at least a great superiority in this

respect will overcome every disadvantage; and a deficiency cannot be counterbalanced by any favourable circumstance. It was by superior discipline that the armies of the great Prussian monarch became the best in the world. The British sailors, from circumstances which produce a better discipline with regard to the conduct of naval affairs, are an over-match, with exception, perhaps, of the Dutch, for those of any other country; and if the armies of Britain are not equal, in every respect, to some of those upon the continent; it is partly owing to the situation and manners of their countrymen, which are less favourable to military pursuits; and partly to the impediments under which their officers lie, in acquiring a scientific knowledge of their profession.

Neither is there any question concerning that class of persons who are supposed to be under the necessity of maintaining what are called the punctilios of honour at the hazard of their lives. The character of a gentleman, whether in Britain, or in any other civilized country of Europe, is understood, in this respect, to be nearly the same,

being formed according to a general standard, with which, however whimsical, every individual of that rank is obliged to comply. The courage of the people of this description depends upon a species of discipline, different from that which is exercised over the military profession, but neither less rigid, nor enforced by punishments less efficacious.

But exclusive of those two classes, the mercenary forces, and persons who by their education and rank are still subjected, in some degree, to the old artificial customs of chivalry, the great body of the people seem to be removed at an extreme distance from all military ideas. They hold the military profession in the lowest estimation. When the son of a tradesman enlists in the army, he is looked upon as a profligate who has been deluded to his ruin; and if he cannot be bought off, he is given up for lost. Even among the gentry, unless where some of the sons shew an early predilection for a military life, those who appear the least qualified to rise by other professions are commonly destined to serve in the army or navy.

Though the mercantile towns in England are much addicted to mobbing, a consequence of their independent circumstances, their mobs are, in most cases, easily quelled by an insignificant body of troops. Thus the bill for extending the privileges of the Roman Catholics, excited a prodigious fury in London and throughout the whole country; but notwithstanding the enthusiasm, with which the populace were actuated in opposing that measure, they were easily intimidated, and, by a mere handful of troops reduced to submission: whereas in Scotland, a poorer and a ruder country, the people persisted in their opposition, and obliged the minister, though he shewed a good deal of reluctance, to abandon his bill.

In the year 1745, a body of Scottish rebels, perfectly undisciplined, and ill-armed, whose numbers did not exceed four or five thousand, marched over a considerable part of England, and, though the country was warmly attached to the house of Hanover, met with no body of men who ventured to oppose them, until the army, which had then been employed in Flanders, was brought

home for that purpose. The people of England, though they knew that their religion and liberties were at stake, did not think proper, on that occasion, to shew themselves in the field; imitating the example of that helpless and timid animal, which, upon the least approach of external violence, shrinks within its shell, and cannot be drawn from that asylum until the danger is removed.

How often have we seen a great majority of the English nation, fired with indignation at the conduct of administration, loud and clamorous in their complaints, waving the banner of *magna charta* in the face of the minister, and availing themselves of the liberty of the press to annoy him on every side; when by a little steady resolution, by the display of a little timely severity, by a judicious application of the machine of government, *pulveris exigui jactu*, they have been completely subdued, and rendered perfectly submissive?

It is unnecessary to remark that this timidity inspired by overgrown wealth,

which renders a rich trading nation vulnerable through the whole of their possessions, and makes them feel an agonizing sensibility to whatever dangers may affect even one shilling of their property, is of great utility in counteracting the excesses of an independent spirit, by strengthening the bands of public authority. The wealth of each individual is a pledge for his quiet and orderly behaviour. It may, doubtless, on the other hand, encourage an ambitious monarch to overturn the liberties of his country. But there is ground to expect, that this timidity will not operate beyond certain limits. If the oppression of government should be carried so far as to aim at the destruction of property, the mercantile people would, probably, be the first to burst the bands of fear, and be actuated by a desperate valour in defence of those objects to which they are so immoderately attached. The effect of great commercial opulence, therefore, is to produce caution and long-suffering under the hand of power, but to ensure ultimately a vigorous opposition to such acts of tyranny

as are manifestly subversive of the fundamental rights of mankind. This, in reality, seems to point at the due medium of that submission which men owe to their political governors; for nothing is more inconsistent with the happiness of society, than the frequent recurrence of the people to resistance upon slight and trivial grievances; and when there is a real necessity to resist the usurpation of the sovereign, he commonly pulls off the mask in sufficient time to give warning to his subjects, that they may be fully justified for uniting in defence of their privileges.

SECTION II.

Of Sobriety and Temperance.

THE motives by which men are excited to action may be reduced to two classes: the desire of obtaining what is pleasant or agreeable, and that of avoiding what is painful or disagreeable. By the constitution of our nature, a pleasure that is near makes a stronger impression upon us than

one that is distant; whence it frequently happens, that we become unable to estimate properly those different objects; and by yielding to a present or immediate enjoyment, we sacrifice a future happiness of greater importance.

The virtue of temperance consists in correcting this vicious tendency, by balancing our several enjoyments, and by never allowing an inferior to usurp the place of a superior pleasure. Fortitude, which has already been considered, exercises a self-command of another kind, by holding a similar balance between painful or disagreeable objects.

The most violent appetites which often produce the greatest irregularity and inconsistency of conduct, are those of hunger and thirst, and such as relate to the intercourse of the sexes. The virtue of temperance therefore is chiefly employed in restraining the excesses of those two natural propensities.

The appetite for food, it is evident, will assume a different aspect in every country, and its gratification will be variously modi-

fied, according as the inhabitants experience a greater plenty or scarcity of provisions. Very poor and rude nations, who have collected no regular fund for subsistence, but depend upon their daily exertions for supplying the calls of nature, are often exposed to the extremities of hunger, and when by good fortune they obtain a plentiful repast, are apt to indulge in the excesses of gluttony. Man, in this miserable state, appears to resemble those voracious brute animals which are fitted to endure a long abstinence, and which, by gormandizing, sometimes destroy their vital functions.

The arts which enable men to accumulate a stock of provisions, render them of course careful and provident of the future. Having been exposed to the pain of hunger, they endeavour to guard against that calamity; and the most obvious reflection will teach them to store up the food which they have no immediate occasion to use. The disposition to hoard grows upon them by favourable circumstances, and inspires not only anxiety to acquire, but reluctance to consume. From the slow and gradual pro-

gress of those improvements which tend to multiply and accumulate the necessaries of life, the pursuits of mankind are principally directed to the acquisition of daily food, and the want of this continues for a long time to be the chief object of their apprehensions. Frugality, therefore, and even parsimony, in this article, are in early ages considered as indispensible qualities, and profusion as an odious vice. In those European nations which have made considerable advances in opulence, we still find evident vestiges of this primitive way of thinking. To cast away any thing that contributes to the subsistence of man is regarded with superstitious abhorrence, as tending to provoke the resentment of Providence. "You know not what "you may come to," is the reproach which an act of this kind commonly excites among the populace in Scotland. To have a small appetite was regarded as a recommendation. "You eat nothing—one would not know what you live upon," were the old-fashioned compliments by which the mistress of the house was accustomed to flatter her guests.

"Our fathers praised rank venison, you suppose,
"Perhaps, young man! our fathers had no nose.
"Not so; a buck was then a week's repast;
"And 'twas their point, I ween, to make it last;
"More pleased to keep it till their friends should come,
"Than eat the sweetest by themselves at home.
"Why had not I in those good times my birth,
"'Ere coxcomb pies, or coxcombs were on earth?"

From the diffusion of wealth by commerce and manufactures, there has arisen in some countries, such a regular and plentiful supply of provisions as among people in the higher and even middling ranks, to banish the idea of scarcity, and to produce, in this respect, a total change of manners. What was formerly a mere necessary expence is now converted into a matter of refinement; and the relief of hunger is lost in the enjoyments of the table. Upon the gratification of the palate, upon the natural hilarity inspired by good cheer, are ingrafted the pleasures of social intercourse; and both corporeal and mental faculties are expected to contribute their share towards an elegant entertainment. As this entertainment is level to every capacity; as it takes hold of propensities which are

very universal, and which from the time consumed in their indulgence, are greatly strengthened by the power of habit: as by exhibiting an appearance of wealth, it becomes in many cases a great source of ostentation and vanity; we need not wonder that it should sometimes run into prodigious excess, that it should frequently encroach upon the important business and attentions of mankind, and that it should prove hurtful and even ruinous to the fortunes of many individuals.

By the bountiful disposition of nature, the removal of the painful sensation of thirst is, in most countries and situations, attended with no labour or trouble. But here in the rudest forms of society, mankind have generally introduced a species of luxury; some artificial beverage, to relieve the insipidity of simple water, or rather to obtain the exhilarating effect of intoxication. Some invention for this purpose appears to have taken place in almost every age and country. The poor savage, upon whose mind there are few traces of thought beyond what arise from the few objects which impress his external senses,

and who, if not roused to exertion for the relief of his wants, passes many a tiresome melancholy hour, flies with avidity to this terrestrial nectar, which creates a new world before his eyes, makes all nature smile and dance around him, and at length steeps his senses in a grateful oblivion of his miserable existence. Our European merchants who traffic in the human species, know sufficiently the effect of this powerful charm, to conquer his affections, or to drown his feelings of humanity; and they scruple not to take advantage of his weakness, by purchasing his wife or his child for a bottle or two of spirituous liquor, or by exciting him for a bribe of the same kind, to kidnap his neighbours, or to join in bloody wars which may give rise to a plentiful harvest of prisoners.

When the use of intoxicating liquors has grown up, and been spread over a country, it is not easily eradicated. The vice of drunkenness, which is universally prevalent among barbarians, is not quickly banished, though in the progress of civilization it may be somewhat modified and restrained. Among the higher ranks, even in countries

far advanced in the arts, the bottle continues to be the great enlivener of conversation, the source of gaiety and pleasantry, which, if it does not always produce true wit, never fails to soften criticism, and while it blunts the faculties of the speaker, augments in a greater proportion, the indulgence and facile applause of the company. The same happy instrument of social mirth bestows upon our failings the garb and aspect of virtue, by inspiring the glow of kindness and affection, by improving the ordinary companion into the bosom friend, and by opening the heart to the overflowings of generosity and benevolence.

We cannot, however, expect that the mirth which rises from the enchanted cup will be always the most refined or polished; or that it will not exceed the bounds of decency and decorum. The same blind and head-strong power which exalts the soul, without the guidance of reason, to sudden friendships and attachments, will also, without cause, provoke and irritate the self-important, the resentful, and discordant passions. The modest Graces wing their

flight from the revels of Bacchus, and are succeeded by loose riot and disorder, by rude and boisterous disputes, and by groundless and unmeaning, though sometimes fatal quarrels.

To the lower orders of the community, to the labouring poor, the delusive poison of intoxication is productive of consequences far more pernicious. It affords, indeed, a healing balsam to their toils and cares; and our fellow-feelings must reclaim against that rigid severity which would altogether deny this consolation to a class of men, by whose painful exertions the prosperity of every state is principally supported, and the rest of the society maintained in ease and affluence. But their excesses in this particular are so pregnant with mischief, so destructive of all industry and domestic attention, and lead so directly to complete dissipation, and shameless profligacy, that sobriety or temperance in the use of intoxicating liquors, has been justly regarded as the leading virtue of the populace, and the contrary, if not the most inexcusable vice, at least the great inlet to every sort of immorality.

It has been commonly thought that the propensity to strong liquors arises from physical causes; and that it is peculiarly prevalent in cold climates. It is probable that the manners of the people in the northern parts of Europe have given rise to this opinion. But it ought to be remembered that the same people, from the nature of the soil, and from the temperature of the weather, lie under great disadvantages with respect to agriculture and the common arts of life, and have therefore long remained in a situation which is favourable to this propensity. As in countries which are exposed to the extremities of cold, the savage life must be the more bitter and uncomfortable, it seems, on that account, to stand more in need of the friendly aid of intoxication; and as the progress of improvement in those countries must be slower and more difficult, so the custom of hard drinking will, in proportion as it has remained longer, be so much the more confirmed.

There is, however, from the history of the world, no ground to believe that the

vice of drunkenness is peculiar to cold climates. The ancient Greeks, though living in the southern part of Europe, appear to have been great drinkers. The same circumstance is mentioned as characteristic of the Gauls. It appears that the modern inhabitants of Spain were formerly distinguished by a similar character; for, in the agreeable novel of Gil Blas, so highly celebrated for its pictures of real manners, the fine gentlemen of Madrid are described as passing the whole night in hard drinking, and as reeling home to bed late in the morning, in the very style which is fashionable in the most drunken parts of Europe. It is true, the author has hinted in his preface, that though the scene of his work is laid in Spain, there are frequent allusions to the manners of his own countrymen; but whether we consider this feature as belonging to the Spaniards or the French, it serves equally to prove that even in modern times, the vice of drunkenness has not been confined to the northern parts of Europe.

The ancient inhabitants of Persia, a still warmer country, were notorious drunkards,

insomuch that Alexander, a man of universal ambition, could not think to be out-done in this respect by a people whom he had conquered in arms*. It is hardly necessary to add, that the use of opium among the Turks, who are forbid by their religion to drink wine, answers the same purpose, and has been introduced upon the same principle, with the fermented and distilled liquors of Europe.

But though debauchery in drinking may for a long time maintain its ground in those countries where it has once been firmly rooted, we have reason to expect that after a certain pitch of improvement in arts and sciences, it will be expelled from every country. The advancement of knowledge contributes, at least in the higher and middling ranks of life, to supply a fund of ideas, productive of continual amusement, and proves a powerful antidote to melancholy or dejection. To people who are

* Darius's Epitaph on himself—"That he was a great "conqueror and a great drinker." See the facts collected on this subject by Mr. Hume. "Essay of Nat. Characters."

provided with constant resources for entertainment from the powers of imagination and reflection, the aid of intoxication is not necessary to exalt their spirits, or to enliven conversation. From the advancement of taste, they are disgusted with that coarse mirth which is the effect of strong liquors, and with that ferment of delirious joy, which is commonly requited by a subsequent mental depression and bodily indisposition. If they call in a cheerful glass, they are not tempted to such a degree of excess as will disturb the feast of reason, or interrupt the flow of elegant pleasantry. In a word, the use of the bottle is rendered subordinate to the correct enjoyment of social intercourse, and becomes merely a branch of that good cheer which constitutes the most learned luxury of the table.

These observations may be illustrated by the change of manners which, in latter times, have taken place in Britain and the countries connected with it. In England the custom of hard drinking among people of the better sort, is in a great measure exploded. The inhabitants of Scotland,

though they still lie under a bad character in point of sobriety, appear to be rapidly following the footsteps of their southern neighbours, in this as well as in other improvements. If the inhabitants of Ireland discover, in this respect a greater attachment to the ancient usage, it is because the arts in general have made less progress in that country. Though the populace, in any of these countries, are doubtless more invariably under the dominion of those propensities which lead to intoxication, there is ground to hope that from increasing habits of industry and frugality, and from the prevailing fashion among their superiors, they will be more and more disposed to correct a vicious indulgence, which they find so prejudicial to their interest.

With regard to the intercourse of the sexes, the virtue of temperance may be considered in three different aspects. The first is exhibited in early and rude nations.

The instinct which leads to the propagation of the species, is less necessary than the appetite for food, which is directed to the preservation of the individual. The former

is more affected by education than the latter, and according to the habits acquired in different situations, puts on a greater variety of aspects. The demands of hunger require a constant and regular supply, while those of the sexual appetite occur only at intervals, and are excluded by numberless wants and cares of greater importance. The former is equally an object of attention in all ages and countries; but the latter must be in great measure overlooked in that miserable state of society where men have made no provision for subsistence, and are engaged in continual struggles for procuring the bare necessaries of life.

It is observed that the greater part of animals, who have much difficulty in procuring their food, which is remarkably the case of all the carnivorous, are restricted in the intercourse of the sexes to particular seasons; and it is probable that in the human species, when they subsist principally by hunting and fishing, the propensities of nature are usually so feeble as to be consistent with similar restrictions.

Even at this early period, however, some kind of marriage, or permanent union between persons of different sexes, for the purpose of rearing and maintaining their children, has generally taken place. That natural affection which is implanted not only in all mankind, but in the more sagacious of the brute animals, disposes the parents universally to co-operate in maintaining their offspring. In the brute creation, indeed, the union arising from that circumstance is commonly of short duration; because the young animal, soon after the birth, is in a condition to provide for its own subsistence. But the offspring of the human species remains, for so long a period, in a state of perfect imbecility, that the parents, in the natural course of things, are likely to have propagated several children before their protection and care of the first can be dispensed with. Their connection, therefore, from the same circumstance which gave rise to it, is prolonged, not only while the mother is capable of child-bearing, but until the youngest child is able to maintain

itself; and the habits which they acquire by living so long in the same family, in the company of each other and of their children, must render it agreeable, and in most cases expedient, that their union should be continued for the rest of their life.

Thus the society produced by marriage, though doubtless originating in a blind propensity, is promoted and supported by feelings of a superior order. The conjugal, the parental, and filial relations give rise to various modifications of mutual sympathy and benevolence, which in their range are not the most extensive, but which, operating in a sphere adapted to the limited capacities of the human heart, are exerted in such directions as are most conducive to the great purposes of human nature. The good which we can do to mankind at large is commonly inconsiderable; but the benefits which may result from our acting with propriety in the exercise of domestic affections, are above all calculation.

In this early state of society, the manners of mankind, with relation to the intercourse of the sexes, are usually removed at the

greatest distance from intemperance. The propensity or instinct which leads to the continuance of the species is commonly no more than sufficient to answer the purpose for which it is implanted in all mankind. In very rude ages, people are so far from being addicted to excess in its indulgence, that upon the slightest degree of refinement in this particular, they become ashamed of its ordinary gratifications. In many barbarous tribes it is a punctilio of decorum that the husband and wife should cohabit by stealth; and if among such people, correct notions of chastity are in a great measure unknown, this proceeds not from habits of debauchery, but from ignorance of those principles which recommend personal fidelity to an individual. It may, at the same time, be remarked, that although the conjugal affection, when joined to the love of offspring, has been capable, at an early period, of cementing families, and thus laying the foundation of political society, it is not of itself sufficient in those times, to give much consideration and dignity to the wife, or even to prevent her, in consequence of her

inferiority in strength and courage from becoming the servant or slave of the husband.

The second aspect of society to which I alluded, is that which arises from the advancement of the useful arts, from the consequent acquisition and extension of property, and from the progress of civil government.

The advancement of a people in the various arts which procure the progressive accommodations and conveniencies of life, and the accumulation of property in different proportions by individuals, must affect the intercourse of the sexes in two different ways. In the first place, when men are placed in a situation which relieves them from the pressure of immediate want, and supplies them with abundance of whatever is necessary to subsistence, their attention is, of course, directed to other less important gratifications; they obey the suggestions of nature by indulging their various propensities, and become, from the influence of habit, more and more addicted to pleasure. The different degrees of wealth, on

the other hand, which arise from the talents or the fortune of individuals, give rise to such differences of rank and condition, as remove different families to a distance from each other, inflame and swell them with family pride and jealousy, and, from an apprehension of unsuitable and degrading alliances, render them averse from that familiarity and freedom of intercourse which might be attended either with licentious indulgence, or with hasty and inconsiderate matrimonial connections.

The indiscriminate gratification of the propensity between the sexes is further obstructed by the general improvements of society. From a gradual refinement of taste and manners, there is produced a nicer selection of objects, and a stronger preference of those individuals, by whose beauty, or other personal qualities, our desires have been peculiarly excited. But the same circumstances, which create more diversity of taste, will tend more frequently to prevent a reciprocity of inclination, and consequently, will often render it more difficult

for the lover to attain the object of his wishes.

The restraints which are thus laid upon the sexual correspondence contribute, in a high degree, to improve and augment the pleasures which result from it. The difficulties, the delays, the disappointments which we experience in pursuit of a favourite gratification, cannot fail to enhance its value, by fixing our attention for a length of time upon the same object, by disposing us to estimate the attainment in proportion to the distress which we feel from the want of it, and by rousing the imagination to paint every circumstance in such colours as may flatter our prevailing inclinations. These are the great expedients of nature, which give rise to peculiar attachments, and by which a simple desire or appetite is often converted into a violent passion.

The effects of mere facility in procuring subsistence, while no difficulties occur in the indulgence of the sexual propensities, may be illustrated by the manners which prevail in Otaheite and those neighbouring islands in the South Sea, with which Euro-

pean travellers have lately made us acquainted. Those people, from their singularly happy climate, are, without industry or labour, possessed of all the necessaries of life. As they have, at the same time, accumulated little or no wealth, they are, in a great measure, strangers to those distinctions of rank which divide and separate the inhabitants of civilized countries; and, as they have never been roused to active exertions, either of body or mind, they are unacquainted with those refinements of taste and manners which arise from the cultivation of the arts. Living, therefore, in constant ease and idleness, they are strongly addicted to sensual pleasure; but they are debauched without passion, and voluptuous without elegance, or even discrimination of objects.

The effect of uncommon restraints upon the intercourse of the sexes may, on the other hand, be observed in the manners of those Gothic nations, who over-ran and subdued the western provinces of the Roman empire. Those nations, acquiring large possessions by their conquest, and spreading themselves over an extensive territory, were

formed into a multitude of separate baronies, under the authority of a sovereign, but so independent, and so feebly united, as to be under little restraint in the exercise of mutual hostilities and depredations. By these peculiar circumstances, which remained for several centuries, neighbouring families contracted such animosities, and entertained such apprehension and jealousy of each other, as became an insuperable bar to their intimate correspondence, and therefore interrupted, in proportion, the communication of the sexes. To this interruption we may ascribe the romantic love, the uncommon purity and delicacy of sentiment, which appear so conspicuously in the manners of that period, and of which there are still very evident and remarkable traces in the turn of thinking, the usages, and the literature of the present European nations.

The ordinary state of civilized society exhibits a medium between those two extremes; with neither the voluptuousness of the former, nor the fantastic love and admiration of the latter; but with a moderate sensibility to pleasure, derived from the

advancement of taste, and with a degree of passion excited by the usual impediments to gratification. Upon the first considerable advances of commerce and the arts, the situation of mankind is rendered so easy and comfortable, as disposes them commonly to enter into marriage whenever they arrive at that period of life which fits them for the discharge of its duties; and in forming this connection, they must frequently, from differences of rank or personal qualities, or from accidental circumstances, meet with various obstacles to the attainment of their wishes, and be engaged in a long courtship, which, by inflaming their desires, and fixing their imagination upon the same object, is likely to create a sincere and lasting attachment; an attachment, upon which all the domestic virtues are easily engrafted, and which is capable of rendering all the cares of the marriage state light and agreeable. The ardour of a blind appetite is thus controuled by feelings of a superior order; and the passion of love becomes the guardian of temperance.

The high cultivation of the elegant arts, and the introduction of immoderate opulence, give rise to a third variety, by which, in relation to the present subject, the manners of society require to be distinguished.

Luxury and expensive living are the natural attendants of great wealth. Excited by mutual emulation, individuals, in proportion to their riches, endeavour more and more to surpass one another in elegance and magnificence, and in supplying those wants by which, from fashionable extravagance, they are continually solicited, must find at length that their income, however large, is inadequate to their demands. They become, of consequence, unwilling to take upon them the additional burden of maintaining a family. While the men, by whose courage and superior exertions property is, in a great measure, engrossed, are thus generally disposed to remain in the state of bachelors, a proportional part of the other sex are laid under the necessity of remaining unmarried; and both, from the operation of the same causes, contract, unavoid-

ably, such habits as tend to disqualify them from enjoying happiness in the married state. It may, at the same time, be expected that persons, who, notwithstanding these discouragements, are induced to form a matrimonial connection, will endeavour to compensate the inconveniences attending it, by regarding the fortune more than the personal attractions of their yoke-mates. From such a mercenary traffic, it would be vain to look for that harmony which is requisite to promote the welfare of the family. To such marriages may be applied the maxim of the civil law: *Societas est mater discordiarum.*

These observations are illustrated by the manners of ancient Rome about the beginning of her despotical government. The great wealth imported from the conquered provinces had then given rise to such a degree of luxury and expensive living as proved extremely unfavourable to marriage, and induced the Emperor Augustus to encourage that union, by various taxes and penalties upon celibacy, and by bestowing suitable premiums upon married people,

and upon those who had produced a number of children. The same circumstance introduced the avowed and very universal practice, among wealthy and unmarried persons, of keeping a concubine, whose children, being of inferior rank, were maintained at less expence, but who, in other respects, was viewed in a light somewhat similar to that of a wife.

So mercenary were the Romans in their matrimonial alliances, that a woman who brought no dower to her husband, was considered in a disgraceful situation; and unless there appeared good evidence of her marriage, she was held to be, not a wife, but a concubine.

The same circumstances which render marriage inconvenient and burdensome, in regard to pecuniary interest, are no less unfavourable to that connection from the general progress of dissipation and voluptuousness.

Among nations possessed of moderate wealth, who are chiefly occupied in the cultivation of the useful arts, the inhabitants are, for the most part, engaged in

serious employments, by which they are separated into various departments, and prevented from holding an extensive communication. The members of neighbouring families, the several knots of kindred and acquaintance, whom accidents, or the transactions of business, have collected in small circles, are accustomed to keep company with one another; but little intercourse is held with strangers. Among persons of different sexes, living in this retired situation, the imagination will frequently be led to form a reciprocal and permanent attachment. But the advancement of a people in those arts which are subservient to pleasure and amusement, occasions a more extensive correspondence among the different members of society. Almost all men of fortune, and of liberal education, whose residence admits of their intercourse, become acquainted with each other, and frequently assemble in all the fashionable meetings of pleasure and amusement. The more opulent they become, and the more polished in their manners, these meetings become the more numerous; and the com-

munication among people of rank and condition is, in proportion, extended and diversified. In these polite circles, the women claim an equal share with the other sex, and by their agreeable accomplishments, by their delicacy and vivacity, as well as by their personal charms, contribute no less to the entertainment.

The unreserved and extensive intercourse of the two sexes has, doubtless, a tendency to divide the attention among a great variety of objects, to efface the impression of one object by that of another; and, consequently, to prevent a strong or lasting attachment to any individual. The sensibility of the heart is thus gradually worn out and exhausted by continual dissipation; and the passion, which formerly excited all the tender affections, is at length converted into a mere vehicle of sensual enjoyment. A spirit of gallantry and intrigue, totally inconsistent with the duties of domestic society, is of course introduced in the higher ranks; to whom it affords that occupation and amusement which their inferiors derive from the pursuits of industry. In the natural

course of things, the dissipated manners of the rich are, by the force of example, communicated to the lower orders, among whom they lose that appearance of refinement in which they were enveloped, and appear in the undisguised form of gross debauchery and common prostitution.

This progress of dissipation and voluptuousness may be observed in all countries where the people have made great advances in the accumulation of wealth, and in the arts which administer to luxury and extravagance. In ancient Rome, in the great Asiatic nations, in modern Italy, France, and England, a dissoluteness of manners, in relation to the intercourse of the sexes, appears to have been the inseparable attendant of great opulence; though from peculiar circumstances in these different countries, it has been exhibited under various modifications.

The ancient Romans passed very suddenly from poverty and barbarism to immoderate wealth and luxury; and, between these two extremes, there seems to have passed no interval which was calculated to refine and

exalt the passion between the sexes. When they advanced, therefore, into the latter situation, about the end of the commonwealth, they had acquired no previous habits, to prevent them from sinking at once into a degree of sensuality, and gross debauchery, of which there is no example. Among them, the shameless profligacy of a Messalina, was understood to exhibit the behaviour of a woman of rank, immoderately addicted to the pursuits of gallantry and pleasure.

In the present opulent nations of Europe, the vestiges which remain of the refined sentiments of a former period, have produced in the higher ranks, a more elegant species of licentiousness; at the same time that the Christian religion, by exalting the merit of restraint, and even of total abstinence, in relation to the sexual correspondence, has contributed, no doubt, to retard a general relaxation of manners. In particular, the authority of the church, which was exerted to render marriage an indissoluble tie, has prevented parents, in many cases, from being led by caprice, or bad humour, to

form such connections as were incompatible with the interest of their children. The regulations to this effect have not, indeed, entirely maintained their ground, in opposition to the spirit of the later age. In some parts of Europe they have been subjected to limitations; in others they have been evaded; in France they have been wholly repealed.

In the great eastern nations, the practice of polygamy, though calculated to promote, in the one sex, an unlimited indulgence in sensual pleasure, is equally adverse, on the one hand, to gross prostitution; and, on the other, to the refinements of sentimental passion. The harams and seraglios of the east are said to exhibit an assemblage of beauty in the utmost variety of elegant forms; but they leave their indolent master nothing to desire except the capacity of enjoyment.

Some benevolent philosophers have indulged the pleasing speculation, that the faculties and virtues of mankind are universally improved by the progress of the arts and sciences; and that human nature, by

culture and education, is led to endless degrees of perfection. To this flattering, and perhaps generally well-founded hypothesis, the circumstance now suggested appears to form a remarkable exception. Nothing can be more inconsistent with the finer feelings of the heart; nothing more incompatible with the order of society; nothing more destructive of those bands which unite men together, and enable them to live in mutual confidence and security, than debauchery and dissolute manners. The indiscriminate voluptuousness of the one sex cannot fail to produce a still greater depravity of the other, by annihilating the female point of honour, and introducing universal prostitution. The rank of the women is thus degraded; marriage becomes hardly the source of a peculiar connection; and the unhappy child who is born in such a family, instead of reaping advantage from the natural prepossessions and affections of its parents, is doomed to suffer the fatal consequences of their jealousy and discord. The effect of their negligence, in such a

situation, may easily be conceived, when we consider the hard fortune which is commonly experienced by the issue of an illegitimate correspondence.

Nature has wisely provided, that the education and even the maintenance of the human offspring, should not depend upon general philanthropy or benevolence, deduced from abstracted philosophical principles; but upon peculiar passions and feelings, which have a more powerful and immediate influence on the conduct of mankind; and, when these passions are weakened, these feelings destroyed, we shall in vain expect their place to be supplied by general views of utility to mankind, or particular interpositions of the legislature.

SECTION III.

Of Justice and Generosity.

THE virtues and vices of mankind relate more immediately, either to the interest of the agent himself or to the interest of others. Of the former class are those which have been already considered. The latter may deserve a separate examination.

When our actions tend to promote the happiness of our neighbours, or when they have a contrary tendency, it may frequently happen, that, while every spectator approves or disapproves of our conduct in these different cases, yet no person imagines we could, with propriety, be compelled to act in the one way, or to abstain from acting in the other. To requite a favour with gratitude, to hazard our fortune in behalf of a friend, to relieve the distress of those with whom we have no particular connection, are actions of this nature. There are many cases, on the other hand, where our behaviour in relation to our neighbours becomes

a matter of strict obligation, and where we may be compelled to follow one course of action, and punished for the contrary. Thus we may be forced to fulfil our promises, and to abstain from doing hurt to others. Actions of the latter sort belong to what, in a strict sense, are called the rules of justice. Those of the former belong to generosity or benevolence.

That the advancement of arts, manufactures, and commerce, has a tendency to improve the virtue of justice in all its branches, appears indisputable.

Mankind are induced to abstain from injustice by the feelings of humanity, which dispose them to avoid hurting their neighbours, as well as by the consideration that such a conduct will be highly conducive to their own interest; and both of these principles operate with peculiar force from the circumstances in which a commercial people is placed. By commerce and manufactures, the contracts and transactions of a country are multiplied almost without end; and the possessions of individuals are extended and varied in proportion; whence the injuries

arising from the breach of promise, from dishonesty and fraud, or from any violation of property, are more sensibly felt, and productive of more sympathy and regret. The advantages, at the same time, which every individual derives from a strict observance of the rules of justice, become also proportionably greater and more manifest. According as the intercourse of society is extended, it requires more and more a mutual trust and confidence, which cannot be maintained without the uniform profession and rigid practice of honesty and fair-dealing. Whoever is unable in this respect, to maintain a fair character, finds himself universally reprobated, is of course disqualified for the exercise of any lucrative profession, and becomes a sort of outcast, who, like the stricken deer, is carefully avoided by the whole herd. Compared with so dreadful a misfortune, the gain which is likely to accrue from the most artful knavery is a mere trifle.

In such a situation it becomes the object of early education to recommend and inculcate the rules of justice. Children are deterred from any failure in this respect, by

timely correction, and by the disgrace which attends it. At a more advanced period of life, the principles of honour, dictated by the general sentiments of mankind, and communicated through the different ranks and orders of society, confirm the same doctrine. In addition to these considerations, religion bestows her aid, by representing what is infamous among men, as offensive to the Deity, and as incurring the effects of his displeasure; while the sanctions of civil government are employed in repressing such disorders, by the salutary example of human punishments.

These principles and habits which characterize a mercantile age and country, are apt to appear most conspicuous in that part of the inhabitants who are actually engaged in trade; because they feel most powerfully the influence of the various motives which have been mentioned. In the most commercial nations of Europe, it is not, indeed, considered as inconsistent with the rules of fair trade, to lay hold of an accidental scarcity for enhancing the price of any commodity; but a merchant of credit is accus-

tomed to deal at a word, and to take no advantage of the ignorance of his customer. Among the rest of the inhabitants, who traffic occasionally, the same scrupulous punctuality is not required; and it is not usual to chaffer, or even to over-reach in a bargain. This is particularly the case in the sale of commodities, which have, in some degree, an arbitrary value; as of horses, where even the country gentleman is frequently not ashamed to become a species of horse-jockey.

The manners of rude nations are, in the present view, diametrically opposite to those of a commercial people. Barbarians, whatever may be their other virtues, are but little acquainted with the rules of justice; they have seldom any regard to their promises, and are commonly addicted to theft and rapine. This is evident from the history of all early nations. In Captain Cook's first voyage to Otaheite, the inhabitants of that island were so far from being ashamed of their thefts, that upon being challenged, they held up the stolen goods in triumph at their success. In Kamtschatska, it is said,

that a young woman has difficulty to procure a husband, until she has given proof of her dexterity in filching*. Among the ancient Egyptians there was no punishment for theft†; nor among the Gauls, when the crime was committed between the members of different tribes‡.

In the highlands of Scotland, stealing of cattle was denominated *lifting*; a term to which no blame appears to have been attached; and it is a well-known fact, that an inhabitant of that country, who, upon the suppression of the rebellion, 1745, had the Pretender under his protection, and who had not been tempted to deliver him up by the great premium offered by government, was at a subsequent period tried at Inverness, and condemned to a capital punishment for horse-stealing.

As in countries highly advanced in trade and manufactures, the trading part of the inhabitants are the fairest and most punctual in their dealings, they are, in the infancy

* See the accounts of the Russian emissaries.

† Aul. Gell. Noct. Att. lib. 11. 58.

‡ Cæsar. de bell. Gall. lib. 6. 5. 23.

of commerce, the most knavish and dishonest.

In a rude and military age, mechanics and tradesmen, who follow sedentary professions, are despised on account of their unwarlike dispositions, and from the low estimation in which they are held, become degraded in their own eyes, and regardless of their character and behaviour. The first merchants, who are a sort of pedlars, wandering from place to place, and frequently reduced to the necessity of begging their bread and their lodging among strangers, are even in a meaner condition than artificers, or labourers, who enjoy a fixed residence in the midst of their kindred and acquaintance. When Ulysses in Homer, is twitted with being a wandering merchant, the patient hero is unable to bear this unmerited reproach; and though he had before determined to conceal his rank, he starts up immediately, to wipe off the aspersion, by distinguishing himself in the athletic exercises.

So long as the ancient Romans preserved their military character, they considered the

profession of a merchant as disgraceful to a free citizen. In modern Europe, trade and manufactures were also, for many centuries, confined to that class of the people who remained in a species of servitude.

From the want of a regular market, for ascertaining the price of commodities, it is also more difficult, in the first dawn of mercantile improvements, to discover and restrain the fraud of individuals. The pedlar, who provides a stock of goods from different quarters, and retails the various articles to persons at a distance from each other, may almost always impose upon his customers with little hazard of detection, and is laid under strong temptation to avail himself of contingencies for increasing his profits.

The mercantile profession seems, accordingly, in all countries where trade is in a low state, to be considered as peculiarly connected with knavery and injustice. Among the early Greek nations, a merchant, and a pirate, were understood to be nearly synonymous terms; and the same tutelary deity, who presided over merchants, became

also the patron of cheats and pick-pockets.

Cicero, whose opinion we may suppose was founded upon the manners of his countrymen, declares that a great wholesale merchant, who imports goods from every quarter, may have a tolerable character; but that a retailer, who buys with a view of selling immediately, is engaged in a very mean employment; because he can make no profit, unless he becomes a great liar*. Mr. Pope appears to have rather injudiciously transferred this thought to the tradesmen of his own country.

"The next a tradesman, meek, and much a liar."

In Armenia, Persia, and many other eastern regions, commerce is managed, in a

* "Mercatura antem, si tenuis est, sordida putanda "est: sin magna et copiosa, multa undique apportans, "multisque sine vanitate impartiens, non est admodum "vituperanda."—"Sordidi etiam putandi qui mercan- "tur a mercatoribus quod statim vendant. Nihil enim "proficiunt nisi admodum mentiantur." [*Cicero de Offic. Lib.* 1. § 42.

great measure, by a set of wandering merchants, who are not only destitute of protection, but even liable to be frequently plundered by government. It can hardly be expected that these people, who are often obliged to bury a part of their stock, and to invest a part of it in jewels, that they may be able to conceal, or suddenly to withdraw their effects, will be scrupulously punctual in their transactions, or that they will not, by exorbitant profit in some cases, endeavour to compensate the losses and hazards which they sustain in others.

The Jews were a people, who, on account of their singular manners and customs, and their uncommon religious rites and ceremonies, had incurred the ridicule, and even in some degree the hatred of other nations. In these unfortunate circumstances, they found little degradation in a mean employment, and therefore betook themselves very generally to merchandize, in those periods and countries where it was held in some degree ignominious. This was more especially the case after the Christian religion had spread itself over Europe, and had over-

whelmed that once chosen people in recent odium and aversion. The Jews became early the principal traders of the modern European nations; and in that capacity acquired immense riches: while in conformity to the state of commerce at that period, they obtained universally the character of knavery and dishonesty; a character which they appear to have long borne without murmuring, and which, even at this day, notwithstanding the great revolution in the rank and behaviour of mercantile people, they have never been able fully to obliterate.

But the circumstances of a nation which has been enriched by trade are not more friendly to justice, than unfavourable to generosity, and to the higher exertions of benevolence.

That a man should be induced to a constant observance of the rules of justice, nothing further is commonly requisite than to understand his own pecuniary interest; but before he can become eminently generous or benevolent, he must resolve to sacrifice that interest to the good of others. Justice

is the result of a deliberate purpose to reject an incidental advantage for obtaining an ultimate, and much greater profit. Generosity is the fruit of a violent impulse, which overlooks all private and selfish considerations. The careful and penurious tradesman, the industrious and active manufacturer, or merchant, can have little temptation to desert the one, but in the course of his professional views, he meets with as little incitement to practice the other. To be just is to breathe his natural element; to require that he should be generous is to invert his ordinary functions, and to make him subsist by organs to which he has not been accustomed.

In a commercial country, the mercantile spirit is not confined to tradesmen or merchants; from a similarity of situation it pervades, in some degree, all orders and ranks, and by the influence of habit and example, it is communicated, more or less, to every member of the community. Individuals form their notions of propriety according to a general standard, and fashion their morals in conformity to the prevailing taste of the times. By living much in society, and

maintaining an intimate correspondence, they are led also to a frequent and ready communication of their thoughts and sentiments. They learn by experience to do this, without hurting the feelings of one another; to conceal their own selfishness or contempt of others; to assume a tone of moderation, deference, and respect; and, without apparent restraint or effort, to accommodate their behaviour to the disposition and temper of their company. While in this manner, they improve in the arts of civility and politeness, they can hardly fail to cultivate their social feelings, by participating in the pleasures and pains of each other, and by mutual endeavours to promote the former, and to relieve or soften the latter. But this intercourse is often little more than a petty traffic, which aims merely at the purchase of reciprocal good offices; or when it proceeds from better motives, it is the offspring of a subordinate, and in some measure a speculative humanity, which in the case of any serious distress, contents itself with weeping and lamenting over the afflicted, but never thinks of sacrificing any great interest to afford him relief.

Even this tinsel reciprocation of small benefits, which people are apt to value more than it deserves, but which in reality is of signal utility in removing the inconveniencies, and improving the comforts which attend our journey of human life, is frequently interrupted by those opposite and jarring passions which arise amid the active pursuits of a commercial nation. In a rude age, where there is little industry, or desire of accumulation, neighbouring independent societies are apt to rob and plunder each other; but the members of the same society are attracted by a common interest, and are often strongly united in the bands of friendship and affection, by mutual exertions of benevolence, or by accidental habits of sympathy. But in a country where nobody is idle, and where every person is eager to augment his fortune, or to improve his circumstances, there occur innumerable competitions and rivalships, which contract the heart, and set mankind at variance. In proportion as every man is attentive to his own advancement, he is vexed and tormented by every obstacle to his prosperity, and

prompted to regard his competitors with envy, resentment, and other malignant passions.

The pursuit of riches becomes a scramble, in which the hand of every man is against every other. Hence the dissensions among persons of the same trade or profession, which are more conspicuous according as the opposition of interest is more direct and pointed. The physicians, the apothecaries, and the lawyers of a small town are commonly not in speaking terms; they are not more instigated to advance their own success than to thwart and oppose that of each other; and even the customers of each party are frequently involved in the quarrel. The same principles exhibit themselves with less indecorum, perhaps, or violence, but not less invariably, through the whole commercial world. That there is no friendship in trade is an established maxim among traders. Every man for himself, and God Almighty for us all, is their fundamental doctrine.

Among an active and polished people, the desire of fame and distinction is productive of competitions and jealousies yet more ex-

tensive. Neither age, nor sex, nor condition; neither wisdom nor folly; neither learning nor ignorance, is exempted from the serious, and the ludicrous discord which originates in this universal passion, or from the acrimony and malice which it often inspires; whether it appears in the light airy shape of vanity, which glides through every corner of society, and presents the aspect of a rival in every accomplishment or agreeable talent; from that of the well-dressed coxcomb who figures at a ball, to that of the eloquent speaker who shakes an admiring senate; or whether it assumes the graver form of ambition, which divides mankind into parties, inflames their party zeal, and their party animosities, and sheltering itself under the multitude of associates, bids defiance to the sense of shame, and becomes deaf to the voice of humanity. Of this passion, the jealousy among authors, will, perhaps, be regarded as the most remarkable instance; but it seems to be so, chiefly because the parties have more the capacity of publishing their disputes, and of circulating the bitter animosities by which they are agitated.

As the pursuit of wealth, the great object of a mercantile nation, contributes to scatter the seeds of envy and selfishness, the luxurious and voluptuous habits, which, as I formerly observed, become also prevalent among the same people, tend to nourish and strengthen those baneful productions.

Sensual pleasures, whether founded upon the enjoyments of the table, or upon the propensity which unites the sexes, are all of a selfish nature; however they may be connected in many cases, with the exercise of social dispositions. The mirth and festivity of the epicure terminates in the gratification of his palate; and the boon companion of a luxurious age will commonly prefer the company where he finds the best dinner. The pleasure of a love-intrigue supposes a communication of sentiments; but the voluptuary scruples not to procure it at the expence of ruin to the object of his wishes.

But what more especially merits attention is, that the fashionable pleasures of an opulent nation become the source of enormous expence, by which multitudes are led to exceed their income, and become embarrassed

in their circumstances. To men who are, at the same time, addicted to expensive habits, and forced to struggle with pecuniary difficulties, wealth is the constant idol, the sovereign dispenser of happiness; and poverty, a dreadful spectre, usurping the place of an awakened conscience, to haunt and terrify the disordered imagination.

While the peculiar habits of an opulent people are thus calculated to increase the bias which is already too strong, by fortifying the love of money, they give unavoidably a particular turn and direction to that passion. They afford a spur to the acquisition of riches, but they encourage, at the same time, and promote the expenditure. The avarice of a frugal, and that of a luxurious age, assume very frequently, a different, and in some respects, an opposite character. The character of the former is that of a miser, who scruples not to practice the meanest arts of accumulation, is unable to take any use of what he has gathered, but living in constant terror of poverty, is afraid to lend out his money at interest, and has recourse to the wretched precaution of con-

cealing it in the earth. Such are the leading features of the miser, as represented by the poets of antiquity, which have been copied by Moliere with more fidelity and humour, than discernment in applying them to the manners of his own age; for the original of this picture is now rarely to be found. The modern usurer is not less rapacious, nor less absorbed in the constant pursuit of gain than the ancient; but he is more enterprising, and less ready to forget the end of his labours. He never loses a penny by hugging his treasure in secret, or by hiding it in the ground. Goaded, on either side, by the love of money, and by the love of pleasure, he obeys alternately the dictates of these opposite passions, and hoards that he may spend to the best advantage. He is covetous and profuse*; but his profusion is merely the avarice of sensual gratification.

From these observations it may be concluded, that the manners of an opulent and luxurious age are, upon the whole, favourable to the general intercourse of society.

* Sui profusus, alieni cupidus. SALLUST.

In the common relations of neighbourhood and acquaintance, it is not expected that individuals will make any great sacrifice of their own interest to that of others. If men abstain from the commission of crimes, if they observe the rules of justice in their various transactions, if they are punctual to their word, so as to create a mutual confidence in their probity and good faith, and if to these virtues they add the constant exercise of those inferior good offices which are dictated by humanity and the desire of pleasing, they are likely to communicate to each other, and to enjoy, all that security, ease, and tranquillity, all that comfort and satisfaction which can reasonably be desired. The practice of these common virtues will be sufficient to facilitate the accumulation of wealth, or to secure the fruits of industry, to those who are in ordinary prosperous circumstances; and at the same time to afford a moderate relief or assistance to those who may be reduced to indigence or distress. The higher exertions of benevolence are out of the question; but a limited and regulated charity is perfectly

consistent with the manners of a refined and polished people; and it may, perhaps, be affirmed with reason, that, from prudent and well-directed interpositions of that nature, more diffusive benefit is likely to arise, both to the public and to individuals, than from the warmest occasional ebullitions of tender-hearted and thoughtless generosity. This, at least, is indisputable, that mere generosity without the punctual observance of the rules of justice, is of less consequence to the prosperity and good order of society, than the latter, though without any considerable share of the former.

But although the spirit of opulent and trading nations tends evidently to improve the intercourse of mankind, in their more general and distant connections, it must be confessed, that when we turn our eyes to the private and intimate relations of human life, we are led, in some respects, to a different conclusion. In their domestic relations, the happiness of mankind seems to depend more upon the warmth of friendship and benevolence, than upon the alderman-like virtue of justice. A fond husband expects more

from his wife than merely that she will not not steal from him. Much more is required from the father of a family, than that he should do no injury to his children, or that he should bestow small charities upon them. The domestic affections, which constitute the chief happiness of private life, are nothing but various modifications of sympathy and friendship; and these, it is to be feared, are not likely to be improved by the peculiar manners of a mercantile and luxurious age. Marriage becomes then almost always an interested connection, in which those pecuniary considerations by which it was formed are likely to keep the ascendant during the whole of its course. On the part of the husband, it is frequently a mercenary bargain calculated to gain a livelihood, or to plaster a broken fortune, by yoking himself with folly, age, or decrepitude. On the part of the wife, it is as frequently the successful issue of a decoy, by which, under the auspices of a careful and experienced mother, she has contrived to recommend her personal attractions, and factitious accomplishments, to the highest bidder. The effects of

opulence and luxury are no less hurtful to the parental and filial affections. The father, immersed in the sordid pursuits of the world, is apt to look upon his family as a tax upon his pleasures, and to find himself elbowed by children, who, as they grow up in years, require from their increasing demands, a suitable retrenchment of his own personal expences. Even if the parents are more conscientious, and less tainted with the vices of the age, they are likely to meet with miserable disappointments and mortifications from the behaviour of their children, who frequently corrupted by bad example and by the selfish maxims which prevail around them, correspond so little to the partial hopes and anxious cares of parental fondnesss, as to waste their time in idleness and dissipation, and even to wait with impatience for the full possessession of that hereditary fortune which will render them their own masters. The future distribution of that fortune may also become a source of discontent among the children themselves, to poison their mutual affections, and to interrupt that

agreeable intercourse which their situation has otherwise a tendency to produce.

The same commercial spirit is adverse to that peculiar attachment which arises among friends, united by particular habits of intimacy, and by similarity of taste and dispositions. The situation of mankind in a rude age, which prevents them from being engrossed by objects of pecuniary interest, and which prompts them to frequent exertions for the protection and defence of each other, is highly favourable to such peculiar connections. The learned father, Lafitau, observes, that among the American savages, it is usual for individuals to form such intimate friendships as give rise to a perfect community of goods; insomuch that they have no separate interest, and even think it incumbent on them to abstain from intermarriages between their respective families, as if they were near relations. To sacrifice their lives for each other is regarded as a duty which these generous and simple-hearted friends are never backward to fulfil. When a warrior is made captive by his enemies, and put to death, as he commonly is by the most excru-

ciating tortures, he frequently pronounces the name of a particular person, and calls upon him to avenge his torments. This person is the friend of his bosom, who is rendered so eager for vengeance, and so careless of life, that hovering about the place where the bloody tragedy has been acted, he commonly soon falls into the hands of the same people. That ingenious author compares the friendship of these barbarians with the connections of a similar nature which have been so highly celebrated in the early history of the Greeks; of Hercules and Iolas, of Theseus and Peritheus, of Achilles and Patroclus, of Orestes and Pylades, and of several other distinguished warriors of antiquity; whose attachment has appeared so little conformable to the manners of a later age as to be frequently misunderstood and misrepresented.

The friendships of a luxurious and mercantile country are of a different complexion. They are cool and sober, breathing no ardour of enthusiasm, producing no unreserved confidence, requiring no sacrifice either of life or fortune. It is enough that you should rejoice in your friend's prosperity; that you

should relieve his distress when it can be done without inconvenience to yourself; and that you should be always ready to assist him with your good advice. But you ought never to forget the famous prudential maxim, of constantly behaving to him as if he were one day to become your enemy. Your friend, as friends go in the present age, is a person whom you esteem, in whose company you receive peculiar pleasure, whose conduct in his absence you endeavour to defend, whose party you embrace in his quarrels or disputes with others, and upon whom, in a word, you confer a double portion of those good offices and civilities which pass current in the intercouse of common acquaintance.

After all, though the virtue of justice commonly maintains the ascendant in opulent and luxurious nations, there may occur particular situations where this order of things is completely reversed. Among such a people, the strict observance of the rules of justice proceeds chiefly from considerations of interest, and from the establishment of a general standard of behaviour which has been founded on those considera-

tions, and with which individuals, if they wish to preserve their character, find it necessary to comply. This may be considered as the effect of artificial discipline, tending to restrain and controul the feelings of avarice, which in that state of society, are commonly wound up to a high pitch, and are apt to form the ruling principle. It may happen, therefore, in singular circumstances, where many persons are tempted in conjunction to the same acts of injustice, where they have an opportunity of acquiring suddenly an immense profit by their transgression, and where the delinquents are so numerous, and of such rank as in some measure to keep one another in countenance, that they should give way to the immediate impulse of their passions, and that having once broken through the restraints to which they were formerly subjected, they should run into very great enormities.

The officers who governed the ancient Roman provinces were in this tempting situation. They possessed an almost unlimited authority over the inhabitants, and were subject to no other controul but that

of the senate, the members of which, having either enjoyed, or expecting to enjoy, similar offices, had commonly a fellow-feeling with their situations, and were, therefore, not likely to take a strict account of their abuses. Their number was, at the same time, so great, as to lighten the share of censure which might fall upon individuals; while their distance from the capital obscured their behaviour, or concealed it entirely from their friends at home. In these circumstances, and inflamed with the rage of accumulation, they seem, as with one consent, to have burst through the restrainsts of justice and humanity, and to have put in practice every engine of extortion, fraud, and oppression. As the same set of officers did not commonly remain above a year or two in the same province, no time was to be lost; and when having amassed enormous wealth, they returned to Rome, to enjoy the fruits of their industry, they found another expedient for the improvement of their fortunes, by lending money at exorbitant interest, to the very

people whom they had already pillaged. This kind of trade became so universal, that, however prohibited by the laws, it was not held, it seems, to be disgraceful; and, though the legal interest was restricted to about twelve per cent. more than forty or fifty per cent. appears to have been frequently exacted even by the most respectable citizens.

The great mercantile companies, established by the modern European nations in very distant countries, and invested with the privileges of monopoly, may be regarded, in the present question, as in a situation similar to that of the ancient rulers of the Roman provinces; with this additional circumstance, that accumulation being in the direct line of their profession, we may expect that it will be prosecuted by them in a more systematic and regular manner. If a company of this kind shall acquire an extensive territory, and be placed at such a distance from the mother-country as to be, in some measure, emancipated from her jurisdiction, it is likely that pecuniary profit

will be the great object in exercising the powers of government; and if the servants of this company, from the extent of their business, and from the implicit confidence necessarily reposed in them, shall become independent of their masters, there is ground to apprehend, that the interest of the public will be assumed as a pretence, to justify the most oppressive measures; and that a set of merchants, acting in concert with one another, and provided with an excuse for their abuses, will proceed, without fear or shame, in plundering the inhabitants, and in building up such fortunes as may enable them, in another hemisphere, not only to appear with dazzling splendour, but secure them from any inquiry into the means by which their wealth has been procured.

There can be little doubt that report has often greatly exaggerated and misrepresented the abuses committed on such occasions. But every exaggeration supposes a foundation in reality. Every one must be covinced, that, if the merchants of a country are invested with unlimited authority

their profits will be commensurate to their desires.

> " Quid non mortalia pectora cogis,
> " Auri sacra fames * ?"

* In a striking picture, exhibited by an eloquent speaker of the present day, a supreme judge is represented as acting in subserviency to that " sacred thirst," and as making a solemn progress over the country, " carrying a bloody standard in one hand, and picking " pockets with the other."

ESSAY VII.

The Progress of Science relative to Law and Government.

AS the advancement of commerce and civilization tends to promote the virtue of strict justice, it of course disposes mankind to cultivate and improve the science of law. By attention and experience, and by a gradual refinement of their feelings, men attain a nicer discrimination in matters of right and wrong, and acquire more skill and dexterity in settling the claims and disputes of individuals, or in proportioning punishments to the various offences which may invade the peace of society.

There is this remarkable difference between justice and the other virtues, that the former can be reduced under general rules, capable, in some degree, of accuracy and precision; while the latter, more uncertain and variable in their limits, can frequently

be no otherwise determined than from a complex view of their circumstances, and must, in each particular case, be submitted to the immediate decision of taste and sentiment. Justice requires no more than that I should abstain from hurting my neighbour, in his person, his property, or his reputation; that I should pay the debts, or perform the services, which by my contracts, or by the course of my behaviour, I have given him reason to expect from me; and that, if I have ever transgressed in any of these particulars, I should make a suitable compensation and reinstate him, as far as possible, in those advantages of which I have unwarrantably deprived him. The line of duty suggested by this mere negative virtue, can be clearly marked, and its boundaries distinctly ascertained. It resembles a matter of calculation, and may, in some sort, be regulated by the square and the compass.

But the other virtues, those more especially which lead us to promote the positive happiness of our neighbours, admit of a greater variety of aspects, and are of a more delicate nature. What is the precise beha-

viour consistent with the most perfect friendship, generosity, gratitude, or other benevolent affections, may often be a difficult question; and the situations which give rise to the complete exercise of those virtues are so diversified by a multiplicity of minute circumstances, that there seldom occur two instances altogether alike; and there is no room for determining any number of cases according to the same general view.

Though mankind, therefore, have in all ages, given a very universal attention to morality, though their constant aim and endeavour has been to recommend themselves, one to another, by practising, or by seeming to practice, those virtues which procure esteem, or affection and confidence —they have made, after all, but slender advances in digesting their knowledge upon the subject, and in reducing it to a regular system. Philosophers have been able to do little more than to exhibit a description or picture, more or less animated, of the principal virtues and vices, together with their various combinations in the characters of individuals, and at the same time to suggest

considerations and views, which, from the condition of human nature, are likely to produce an admiration and love of virtue, as well as a detestation and abhorrence of vice.

The first moralists, among an ignorant and simple people, were contented with giving general advices, for the benefit of such as were destitute of experience, to guard against the temptations to vice, and the irregular influence of the passions. Parents, desirous of promoting the welfare of their children, men of sagacity, who, in the course of a long life, had surveyed the vicissitudes of human affairs, were induced to communicate the fruits of their experience, and to inculcate such observations and maxims as might correct the errors and imprudences to which mankind are peculiarly liable. Hence the numerous proverbs which have been circulated in all nations, containing such moral and prudential maxims, as, from an apparent shrewdness of remark, from strength or felicity of allusion, or from any peculiar point of expression, were thought worthy of atten-

tion, and frequently repeated. Of a similar nature, but uniting, in some cases, a train of reflection upon the same subject, are those observations, and advices, relating to the conduct of life, which have been collected by early writers, or delivered by ancient sages of high reputation; such as, the proverbs of Solomon, the words of Agur, the wisdom of the son of Sirah, a part of the writings of Hesiod, and the sayings of those who are denominated the wise men of Greece.

Succeeding writers endeavoured to explain and enforce these observations and maxims by historical events, real or fictitious; and to illustrate their truth, by allegorical representations, taken from the brute creation, or from those different parts of nature in which we may trace any resemblance to human actions and passions. Of this latter sort are the parables of Scripture, the fables known to us by the name of Pilpay, which appear to have enjoyed a very ancient and extensive reputation in the eastern world; and those of equal celebrity in Europe, which are ascribed to Æsop,

and which have been translated, paraphrased, and embellished by such a multitude of eminent authors. Even after those early observations, from the general diffusion of knowledge, have ceased to convey much instruction, the apologue or fable, has continued, with several men of genius, to be a favourite mode of composition, on account of the delicate strokes with which it is capable of exhibiting the follies and foibles of human life.

When men had been accustomed to consider in detail the several branches of human conduct, they were led by degrees to more connected views, and extensive reasonings. They were led to enumerate and arrange the principal virtues and vices, and to distribute them into different classes, according to the various feelings or passions, from which they proceed, or the different ends to which they are directed. The celebrated and well known division of the virtues into four great classes, usually denominated the four cardinal virtues, which has been handed down to us by the Greek and Roman writers, and which is reported to have been

brought by Pythagoras from the east, appears to be a very ancient, and at the same time, a successful attempt of this nature.

The arrangement and classification of the several virtues, could hardly fail to occasion enquiries and discussions concerning the peculiar character of each; and more especially to suggest an examination of the circumstances by which all the virtues are distinguished from the opposite vices. This gave rise to the far-famed question, *Wherein consists virtue?*

The great distinction between virtue and vice appears to consist in the different sentiments which they excite in the beholders, and in their opposite tendency, to produce *happiness* or *misery* to mankind.

There is in virtue a native beauty and excellence, which is felt and acknowledged by all the world; which, from the immediate contemplation of it, and without regard to its consequences, is the genuine source of pleasure and satisfaction; and which procures to the person in whom it is discovered, universal love and esteem, with various modifications of benevolence. The natural

deformity of vice; the disgust and aversion with which it is regarded; and the contempt and abhorrence, or the indignation and resentment which it excites, are no less conspicuous. That these feelings exist in the human mind is indisputable; but whether they are simple and original feelings, intended by nature for this purpose alone; or whether they are excited from different views and reasonings, and consequently, are capable of explanation and analysis, has been the subject of much philosophical disquisition; a disquisition highly curious and interesting to the lovers of metaphysical knowledge; though, in relation to practical morality, of little or no importance.

The tendency of all virtuous actions to produce happiness, either to the person who performs them or to others, and the contrary tendency of all vicious actions, are considerations, which, to the bulk of mankind, will appear of still greater magnitude, in creating a preference of the former to the latter. In this view, those virtuous actions which promote a man's own good, are agreeable to a spectator, from those bene-

volent feelings which render him pleased with the happiness of the person who performs them; while those actions which promote the good of others, gratify the selfish feelings of the spectator, and call forth a sort of gratitude from every person who conceives himself within the sphere of their beneficial influence. We need not be surprised, therefore, that men should universally bestow much higher applause upon the benevolent, than upon the selfish virtues; or that some eminent philosophers have considered the latter in the light merely of useful qualities, which are not the proper objects of moral approbation. The person who performs a benevolent action appears in the light of a benefactor; and, as we readily suppose ourselves to be the objects of his beneficence, we feel, upon that account, a disposition to make a suitable return of good offices; we look upon him as peculiarly worthy of our good will and affection; and are thence led to form a notion of his meriting a reward.

From considering the beneficial tendency of all the vritues, philosophers proceeded

to a more general enquiry, concerning the supreme good or happiness of mankind, and the circumstances by which it is produced; whether it be produced by virtue alone, or by what is called pleasure, or from the union and co-operation of both?

Such appear to be the principal steps by which men have advanced in cultivating the general science of morality, which have undoubtedly been of great utility in presenting such views and considerations as were fitted to awaken the noblest and best affections of the heart; but which often terminating in vague reflection, or speculative disquisition afford no specific information, no precise land-marks for the regulation of our conduct. If we do not miss our way in the journey of life, it is more from our general knowledge of the compass, than from any directions we receive concerning the several windings and turnings of the road.

But in relation to strict justice, the attention of mankind has been excited and directed in a different manner, and has produced an examination of particulars much more minute and accurate. As individuals who

have much intercourse, are likely, on many occasions, to experience an opposition of interest, and if they are independent of each other, must be liable to numerous disputes in matters of right, they have in the infancy of society, no other method of terminating any difference which cannot be amicably adjusted than either by fighting, or by referring it to the decision of a common arbiter; and this latter mode of accommodation, which flatters the sanguine expectations of either party, and which, by preventing a quarrel, must commonly be agreeable to their private friends, as well as to the friends of good order and public tranquillity, is likely to be more frequently adopted in proportion as, by the habits of living in society, people become less quarrelsome in their temper, and more under the guidance of prudence and discretion.

The arbiters most frequently chosen on those occasions, will probably be persons who from their eminent reputation for wisdom and integrity, possess the confidence of both parties, and by their high station, and superior influence, are capable of giving

weight to their decisions. The longer these men have officiated in the same employment, provided they have acted with tolerable propriety, the respect paid to their opinions will be the greater, and the disposition to treat them with deference and submission, will become the more habitual. Their own efforts to render their sentences effectual will also, from considerations of expediency, be supported by the general voice of the community; till at length, by the assignment of an armed force to assist them in enforcing obedience, they are invested with power to determine law-suits independent of any reference to parties, and thus, in the natural progress of things, are converted into regular and permanent judges.

Corresponding to the advices and prudential maxims which are circulated by men of experience and observation, in the primitive cultivation of morality, are the decisions of arbiters and judges, which constitute the foundation of the science of law. From the various disputes of individuals, and from the various claims that are successively decided

and enforced, there is formed a set of practical rules of justice, which are gradually multiplied, and according to the different situations and relations of mankind in society, gradually extended and diversified.

The disputes among mankind are innumerable; but as one dispute is often very like another, it is apt to be decided in a similar manner; and when a number of cases have been determined upon the same grounds, there is introduced a general rule, which from the influence of habit and of analogy, is extended, even without examination to other cases of the same kind. Though this procedure originates in a propensity natural to all mankind, it is doubtless recommended and confirmed by its utility. The general rules of law are of signal service, by enabling every person to simplify his transactions, as well as to ascertain the tenor of conduct which he is bound to maintain, and by proving at the same time, a check to the partiality of judges, who must be ashamed or afraid to deviate from

that beaten path, which is universally known, and easily distinguished.

The advantages, however, arising from the general rules of justice, are not without limitations. When a great number of claims are decided from the consideration of those outlines in which they all agree, the smaller circumstances in which they happen to differ must of course be overlooked; and the decision may, therefore, in some instances be productive of injustice. This is the foundation of that old complaint, which, in every country, has been made against the *extremity of the law.* It is necessary, for this reason, to forego in many cases, the benefit of that uniformity and certainty derived from the strict observance of a general rule, and by introducing an exception from the consideration of what is equitable in particular circumstances, to avoid the hardship which would otherwise fall upon individuals. We must on this as on many other occasions, compare and balance the inconveniencies which present themselves on opposite sides, and be contented with submitting to those which are of the least importance.

The interpositions of equity, which are made in detached and singular circumstances, are at first regarded as extraordinary deviations from that legal maxim, which, however just and expedient in other cases, is found in some particular instance, to be hard and oppressive. But when these interpositions have been often repeated in similar situations, they become familiar and habitual; and such of them as depend upon a common principle, are reduced into the same class, the boundaries of which are precisely determined.

In this manner, by the successive litigation of individuals, and by the continued experience and observation of judges, the science of law grows up in society, and advances more and more to a regular system. Particular decisions become the foundation of general rules, which are afterwards limited by particular exceptions; and these exceptions being also generalized, and reduced into different classes, are again subjected to future limitations. From a few parent stems, there issue various branches; and

these are succeeded by subordinate ramifications; diminishing gradually in size, while they increase in number; separated from each other by endless divisions and subdivisions; exhibiting a great multiplicity and variety of parts, uniformly and regularly adjusted; and which may, therefore, be easily and readily traced through all their different connections.

But though the rules of justice derive their origin from the business of the world, and are introduced by the actual decisions of judges, their extensive utility is likely to attract the notice of speculative reasoners, and to render them the subject of criticism and philosophical discussion. As from various causes the practical system of law in any country is apt, in many respects to deviate from that standard of perfection which nature holds up to the speculative mind, the detecting of its errors and imperfections, and the display of its peculiar advantages, become an agreeable exercise to men of ingenuity and reflection; and from such disquisitions, it is reasonable to expect that the

knowledge of mankind will be extended, their prejudices corrected, and useful improvements suggested.

In speculating upon the system of law in any country, it is natural to compare it with other systems, and by examining and contrasting the respective advantages or disadvantages of each, to explain and illustrate the nature and tendency of different regulations. From these comparisons, pursued extensively, and accompanied by such reflections as they must naturally suggest, philosophers at length conceived the idea of delivering a system of law, free from the defects which occur in every practical establishment, and which might correspond in some measure, with our views of absolute perfection; a noble idea which does not appear to have entered into the imagination of any Roman or Greek writer, and which may be regarded as one of the chief improvements in the philosophy of modern Europe. Hence the systems of *jurisprudence*, which, after the revival of letters, have occurred in such multitudes, and which have been dressed in different shapes, and with

different degrees of accuracy by Grotius and other speculative lawyers.

It must be acknowledged, that the execution of those works has not equalled the merit of the attempt. Although they profess to deliver the rules of justice, abstracted from the imperfections of every particular establishment, they appear, for the most part, to follow implicitly, at least in several particulars, the ancient Roman system, which, notwithstanding the consideration and celebrity it has very deservedly attained, is in many of its doctrines erroneous, and in some of its principles narrow and illiberal.

A more material defect in most of the writers on jurisprudence is their not marking sufficiently the boundaries between strict law and mere morality. They seem to consider, what a good man, from the utmost propriety of feelings and scruples of conscience, would be disposed to do, rather than what an upright judge would compel him to perform; and are thus led frequently to confound what is properly called justice (which requires that we should avoid hurting our neighbours,) with generosity or benevolence,

which prompts us to increase their positive happiness.

The attempts to delineate systems of jurisprudence, which have been so often repeated with more or less perspicuity or conciseness, but with little variation in substance, opened at length a new source of speculation, by suggesting an enquiry into the circumstances which have occasioned various and opposite imperfections in the law of different countries, and which have prevented the practical system, in any, from attaining that improvement which we find no difficulty in conceiving. In the prosecution of this enquiry, more especially by President Montesquieu, by Lord Kames, and by Dr. Smith, the attention of speculative lawyers has been directed to examine the first formation and subsequent advancement of civil society: the rise, the gradual development, and cultivation of arts and sciences; the acquisition and extension of property in all its different modifications, and the combined influence of these and other political causes, upon the manners and customs, the institutions and laws of any people. By tracing in this

manner the natural history of legal establishments, we may be enabled to account for the different aspect which they assume in different ages and countries, to discover the peculiarity of situation which has, in any case, retarded or promoted their improvement, and to obtain, at the same time, satisfactory evidence of the uniformity of those internal principles which are productive of such various and apparently inconsistent operations.

The system of law, in every country is divided into that part which regulates the powers of the state, considered as a corporation or body politic; and that which regulates the conduct of the several members of which this corporation is composed. The former is the government, the law which *constitutes;* the latter, the law which is *constituted.* The former may with propriety, though not in the common acceptation be called the *public;* the latter the *private* law.

To government belongs the province of appointing judges for the determination of law-suits; of establishing an armed force,

to secure internal tranquillity as well as for defence against foreign enemies; and also, in cases where the dictates of justice are silent, that of superadding to the private law such positive regulations or statutes, as peculiar conjunctures may render necessary or expedient. It is evident, therefore, that the state of the private law in any country must be entirely subordinate to the nature of its government; and that according to the merit or demerit of the latter, will be the excellence or deficiency of the former. The origin and progress of different public institutions, and the manner in which they have arisen, and been variously modified, from the circumstances of mankind, and from the different improvements in society, are on this account, objects of great curiosity, which present an important and leading speculation in the natural history of law.

All government appears to be ultimately derived from two great principles. The first which I shall call *authority*, is the immediate effect of the peculiar qualities or circumstances, by which any one member of society may be exalted above another. The

second is the consideration of the advantages to be derived from any political establishment.

1. Superior bodily qualities, agility, strength; dexterity of hand, especially in using the weapons employed in fighting; as well as uncommon mental endowments; wisdom, knowledge, fidelity, generosity, courage, are the natural sources of admiration and respect, and consequently of deference and submission. A school-boy, superior to his companions in courage and feats of activity, becomes often a leader of the school, and acquires a very despotic authority. The strongest man of a parish assumes a pre-eminence in their common diversions, and is held up as their champion in every match or contest with their neighbours. The patriarchal government in the primitive ages of the world, and the authority possessed by the leaders of barbarous tribes in those periods which preceded the accumulation of property, are known to have arisen from similar circumstances. The heroes and demi-gods of antiquity, were indebted solely to their valour, and their

wonderful exploits, for that enthusiastic admiration which they excited, and for that sovereign power to which they were frequently exalted.

The acquisition of property, whether derived from occupancy and labour in conformity to the rules of justice, or from robbery and oppression, in defiance of every law, human and divine, became another and a more extensive source of authority. Wealth, however improperly in the eye of a strict moralist, seldom fails to procure a degree of admiration and respect. The poor are attracted and dazzled by the apparent happiness and splendour of the rich; and they regard a man of large fortune with a sort of wonder, and partial prepossession, which disposes them to magnify and overrate all his advantages. If they are so far beneath him as not to be soured by the malignity of envy, they behold with pleasure and satisfaction the sumptuousness of his table, the magnificence of his equipage, the facility and quickness with which he is whirled from place to place, the number of his attendants, the readiness with which they

observe all his movements, and run to promote his wishes. Delighted with a situation which appears to them so agreeable, and catching from each other the contagion of sympathetic feelings, they are often prompted by an enthusiastic fervor, to exalt his dignity to promote his enjoyments, and to favour his pursuits. Without distinguishing the objects which figure in their imagination, they transfer to his person that superiority which belongs properly to his condition, and are struck with those accomplishments, and modes of behaviour, which his education has taught him to acquire, and which his rank and circumstances have rendered habitual to him. They are of course embarrassed in his presence by impressions of awe and reverence, and losing sometimes the exercise of their natural powers are sunk in abasement and stupidity *.

The authority, however, of the rich over the poor is, doubtless, chiefly supported by selfish considerations. As in spending a

* Theory of Moral Sentiments.

great fortune, the owner gives employment, and consequently subsistence to many individuals, all those who, in this manner obtain or expect any advantage have more or less an interest in paying him respect and submission. The influence which may be traced from this origin, operates in such various directions, is distributed in such different proportions, and so diffused through every corner of society, that it appears in its degree and extent to be incalculable. Uncommon personal talents occur but seldom; and the sphere of their activity, so to speak, is often very limited. But the inequalities in the division of wealth are varied without end; and though their effect is greater in some situations of mankind than in others, they never cease, in any, to introduce a correspondent gradation and subordination of ranks.

These original circumstances, from which authority is derived, are gradually confirmed and strengthened by their having long continued to flow in the same channel. The force of habit, the great controuler and governor of our actions, is in nothing more

remarkable than in promoting the respect and submission claimed by our superiors. By living in a state of inferiority and dependence, the mind is inured to subjection; and the ascendant which has been once gained is gradually rendered more complete and powerful.

But the force of habit is much more effectual in confirming the authority derived from wealth, than that which is founded on personal qualities. The superior endowments, either of the body or of the mind, can seldom operate vey long in the same direction. The son of an eminent general, or poet, or statesman, is most commonly remarkable for none of the splendid abilities by which the father was distinguished; at the same time, that we behold him in a contrasted light, which deepens the shade of his deficiency. The case is different with relation to wealth, which, in the ordinary course of things, is transmitted, by lineal succession, from father to son; and remains for many generations in the same family. The possessor of that estate, therefore, who

bears the name, and who exercises the powers which belonged to his ancestors, obtains not only the original means of creating dependence which they enjoyed, but seems to inherit in some degree, that consideration and respect, that influence or attachment, which, by their high station, and by the distribution of their favours during a long period, they were able to accumulate. This is the origin of what is called *birth*, as the foundation of authority, which creates a popular prepossession for the representative of an ancient family, giving him the preference to an upstart, though the latter should possess greater abilities and virtues.

From the operation of these different circumstances; from the accidental superiority of personal qualities, and from the unequal distribution of wealth, aided and confirmed by the force of habit, systems of government have grown up, and been variously modified, without exciting any inquiry into their consequences, and without leading the people to examine the grounds of their submission to the constituted authorities.

2. But when, in the course of political transactions, particular persons grossly abuse their powers, or when competitions arise among individuals possessing influence and authority, and of consequence parties are formed, who espouse the interest of the respective leaders, the public attention is roused to scrutinize the pretensions of the several candidates, to compare the different modes of government which they may propose to introduce, and to examine their title to demand obedience from the rest of the community.

In such inquiries, it is hardly possible to avoid suggesting another principle, more satisfactory than that of mere authority; the general *utility* of government; or rather its absolute necessity, for preventing the disorders incident to human society. Without a subordination of ranks, without a power, vested in some men, to controul and direct the behaviour of others, and calculated to produce a system of uniform and consistent operations, it is impossible that a multitude of persons, living together, should be induced to resign their own pri-

vate interest, to subdue their opposite and jarring passions, and regularly to promote the general happiness.

There are natural rights, which belong to mankind antecedent to the formation of civil society. We may easily conceive, that, in a state of nature, we should be entitled to maintain our personal safety, to exercise our natural liberty, so far as it does not encroach upon the rights of others; and even to maintain a property in those things which we have come to possess, by original occupancy, or by our labour in producing them. These rights are not lost, though they may be differently modified when we enter into society. A part of them, doubtless, must be resigned for the sake of those advantages to be derived from the social state. We must resign, for example, the privilege of avenging injuries, for the advantage of being protected by courts of justice. We must give up a part of our property, that the public may be enabled to afford that protection. We must yield obedience to the legislative power, that we may enjoy that good order and tranquillity to be

expected from its cool and dispassionate regulations. But the rights which we resign, ought, in all these cases, to be compensated by the advatages obtained; and the restraints, or burdens imposed, ought neither to be greater, nor more numerous, than are necessary for the general prosperity and happiness.

Were we to examine, according to this criterion, the various political systems which take place in the world, how many might be weighed in the balance and found wanting? Some are defective by too great strictness of regulation, confining and hampering natural liberty by minute and trivial restraints; more have deviated widely from the purpose by too great laxity, admitting, an excessive license to the various modifications of knavery and violence; but the greatest number have almost totally failed in producing happiness and security from the tyranny of individuals, or of particular orders and ranks, who, by the accidental concurrence of circumstances, acquiring exorbitant power, have reduced their fellow-citizens into a state of servile subjection. It is a mortifying reflection, to observe, that,

while many other branches of knowledge have attained a high degree of maturity, the master-piece of science, the guardian of rights, and of every thing valuable, should, in many enlightened parts of the world, still remain in a state of gross imperfection. Even in countries where the people have made vigorous efforts to meliorate their government, how often has the collision of parties, the opposite attractions of public and private interest, the fermentation of numberless discordant elements, produced nothing at last but a residue of despotism.

It may here be remarked, that, when a political constitution is happily constructed, it not only excites approbation from the ultimate view of its beneficial tendency, but, like a complex machine, in which various wheels and springs are nicely adjusted, it affords additional pleasure, from our sense of order and beautiful arrangement. If we are pleased with the survey of a well-regulated farm or workhouse, in which there is nothing slovenly or misplaced, nothing lost or superfluous, but in which every opera-

tion, and every article of expence, is directed to the best advantage, how much greater satisfaction must we receive, in beholding the same regular disposition of parts, the same happy adjustment of means to a beneficial purpose, exhibited in a system so complicated and extensive, as to comprehend the moral and political movements of a great nation?

In England, where the attention of the inhabitants has been long directed to speculations of this nature, the two original principles of government, which I have mentioned, were distinguished by political writers as far back, at least, as the commencement of the contest between the king and the people, upon the accession of the House of Stewart, and were then respectively patronized and adopted by the two great parties into which the nation was divided. The principle of *authority* was that of the tories; by which they endeavoured to justify the pretensions of the sovereign to absolute power. As the dignity of the monarch excited universal respect and

reverence, and as it was not conferred by election, but had been immemorially possessed by a hereditary title, it was understood to be derived from the author of our nature, who has implanted in mankind the seeds of loyalty and allegiance. The monarch is, therefore, not accountable to his subjects, but only to the Deity, by whom he is appointed; and consequently his power, so far as we are concerned, is absolute; requiring, on our part, an unlimited passive obedience. If guilty of tyranny and oppression, he may be called to an account in the next world, for transgressing the laws of his Maker; but, in this life, he is totally exempted from all restraint or punishment; and the people, whom heaven in its anger has visited with this affliction, have no other resource than prayers and supplications.

The whigs, on the other hand, founded the power of a sovereign, and of all inferior magistrates and rulers, upon the principle of *utility*. They maintained, that as all government is intended for defending the natural rights of mankind, and for promoting the happiness of human society, every

exertion of power in governors, inconsistent with that end, is illegal and criminal; and it is the height of absurdity to suppose, that, when an illegal and unwarrantable power is usurped, the people have no right to resist the exercise of it by punishing the usurper. The power of a king is no otherwise of Divine appointment than any other event which happens in the dispositions of Providence; and, in the share of government which is devolved upon him, he is no more the vicegerent of God Almighty than any inferior officer, to whom the smallest or meanest branch of administration is committed.

At the same time that the whigs considered the good of society as the foundation of our submission to government, they attempted to modify and confirm that principle by the additional principle of *consent*. As the union of mankind in society is a matter of choice, the particular form of government introduced into any country depends, in like manner, upon the inclination of the inhabitants. According to the general current of popular opinion, they adopt certain

political arrangements, and submit to different rulers and magistrates, either by positive regulation and express contracts, or by acting in such a manner as gives room to infer a tacit agreement. As government, therefore, arose from a contract, or rather a number of contracts, either expressed or implied, among the different members of society, the terms of submission between the governors and the governed, as well as the right of punishing either party, upon a violation of those original agreements, may thence be easily and clearly ascertained.

With respect to this origin of the duty of allegiance, which has been much insisted on by the principal writers in this country, and which has of late been dressed and presented in different shapes by politicians on the continent, it seems rather to be a peculiar explanation and view of the former principle of utility, than any new or separate ground of our submission to government; and even, when considered in this light, it must be admitted with such precautions and limitations, that very little advantage is gained by it.

The obligation of a contract is liable in all cases, to be controuled and modified by considerations of general utility; and a promise inconsistent with any great interest of society is not productive of moral obligation. In reality, men, when they come into society, are bound to preserve the natural rights of one another; and, consequently, to establish a government conducive to that end. Good government is necessary to prevent robbery, murder, and oppression; and if a man be supposed to have promised, that he would support or obey a government of an opposite tendency, it would be his duty to break such an illegal compact, and to reform such an unjust constitution.

The addition of a promise, at the same time, appears but little to increase the weight of that previous obligation. The obligation to abstain from murder, receives but little additional strength by our giving a promise to that effect.

It seems, indeed, to be a maxim universally admitted, that every nation is entitled to regulate its own government; but this

proceeds upon the presumption that every nation is the best judge of what is expedient in its peculiar circumstances, and is likely to receive most benefit from that peculiar constitution which is introduced by the voice of the majority. The maxim, therefore, must be understood with exception of such political arrangements as are evidently tyrannical, and is applicable to such forms of government only, as in point of expediency admit of different opinions.

It is understood, on the other hand, that no foreign state is entitled to controul or restrain its neighbours, in modelling and establishing their own political system; because, whatever pretences for such interference may be assumed, it never is dictated by a benevolent purpose, but commonly proceeds from selfish and sinister motives. As different states have always a separate, and very frequently an opposite interest, it must be expected that each will invariably pursue its own; and that, in seeking to aggrandize itself, the constant object of its policy, whether professed or concealed, will be to limit the power, and prevent the

aggrandizement of its neighbours. There could not, therefore, exist a more fatal calamity to any country, than that its administration and government should be settled under the direction of its neighbours.

There occur, at the same time, a variety of circumstances, in which it should seem, that the inhabitants of a country, by living under the protection of its laws, give no good reason to infer a tacit promise of submission to its government,

It would be absurd to suppose, that the inhabitants of Turkey have given a free consent to support that government under which they live. Even in other countries, less benumbed with ignorance and stupidity, or sunk in the lethargy of despotism, a great part of the inhabitants feel themselves under a sort of necessity to remain, where the language and habits of life are familiar to them, where they enjoy the comfortable intercourse of their friends, and where they have already secured the regular means of subsistence. Their submission to the government is, therefore, extorted by the prospect of those inconveniencies which would attend

their emigration; and if it were at all to be regarded in the light of a promise, would be such a one as ought to be set aside from equitable considerations.

When we examine historically the extent of the tory, and of the whig principle, it seems evident, that from the progress of arts and commerce, the former has been continually diminishing, and the latter gaining ground in the same proportion. In England, so late as the year 1688—

"The right divine of kings to govern ill,"

was a doctrine still embraced in general by the landed gentry, by the church, and by a great part of the nation; and had it not been for the terror of popery, the revolution at that time would not have taken place. Since that period, however, there has been a gradual progress of opinions. Philosophy has been constantly advancing in all the departments of science; has been employed in reducing all the works of art, all the appearances of nature, to their principles; and has not neglected to push her researches into political, as well as other branches of specu-

lation. The mysteries of government have been more and more unveiled; and the circumstances which contribute to the perfection of the social order have been laid open. The degrees of power committed to individuals, have been placed on their proper basis; and the chief magistrate, when stript of his artificial trappings, and when the mist of prepossession which had surrounded him is dispelled, appears naked, and without disguise, the real servant of the people, appointed for the important purpose of superintending, and putting in motion the great political machine. The blind respect and reverence paid to ancient institutions has given place to a desire of examining their uses, of criticising their defects, and of appreciating their true merits. The fashion of scrutinizing public measures, according to the standard of their utility, has now become very universal; it pervades the literary circles, together with a great part of the middling ranks, and is visibly descending to the lower orders of the people.

During the rebellion in 1745, a gentleman of some eminence, who had embarked

in that ridiculous project, is said to have distinguished himself, by defending the measure upon what were called whig principles. This was, at that time regarded as a novelty, and was far from being well received by his associates; but so great has been the progress of opinion since that period, that the more liberal part of the tories have now caught universally the mode of reasoning employed by their adversaries, and are accustomed to justify the degree of monarchical power which they wish to establish, not by asserting that it is the inherent birthright of the sovereign, but by maintaining that it is necessary for the suppression of tumult and disorder.

Even that hardy race, who formerly issued from their mountains to attack him whom they considered as the usurper of the throne, are long since fully reconciled to the beneficial government of a German elector, raised by an act of parliament to the sovereignty of a free people*.

* See Addison's verses to Sir Godfrey Kneller.

The whigs themselves have not been exempted from the progressive operation of the same circumstances, which have gradually exalted their speculative principles, and occasioned a proportional change in their practical system. It cannot be overlooked, that the disposition to pry into the abuses of government is likely to suggest limitations in the power of rulers; and when a people at large employ themselves in discussing the advantages arising from different political arrangements, they must feel a bias in favour of that system, which tends to the equalization of ranks, and the diffusion of popular privileges*.

The despotism, which had long been deeply rooted upon the neighbouring continent, checked the progress of political speculation, and taught the people, not only to suffer, but even to exult in their fetters.

* Hence the distinction between the *old* and the *new* whigs, by which a famous political character endeavoured lately to cover the desertion of his former tenets; and hence too a pretty general suspicion, that many nominal adherents of that party have become secret admirers of democracy!

Philosophy, however, triumphed at length over ancient customs; and the light of science, which had long been diffused in every other department, discovered the rights of man, and the true principles of government. The nation awoke, as from a dream of horror and distress. Their enthusiasm in correcting abuses and in propagating the new system, rose to a height proportioned to the danger which they had escaped, and the obstacles which they had to surmount. It bore down all opposition; it swept away those corrupt institutions which had been the work of ages; it levelled with the dust those bulwarks which avarice and ambition had erected for maintaining their encroachments; but unhappily, in the general wreck of opinions, it overthrew those banks and landmarks, which while they defended the civil rights of the inhabitants, might have contributed to direct and regulate the new establishment.

It seems worthy of remark, that when the new system in France appeared likely to spread over the rest of Europe, the alarm and panic which it struck among the inha-

bitants of this country, was chiefly excited by a prospect of the dangers with which they were threatened, and the arguments employed in opposing and combating that system, were drawn entirely from the anarchy and confusion, the destruction of all rights and liberties, religious and civil, with which it would be attended; and the chief alarmists were taken from that class of men who had been denominated whigs.

Upon the whole, it is evident that the diffusion of knowledge tends more and more, to encourage and bring forward the principle of utility in all political discussions; but we must not thence conclude that the influence of mere authority, operating without reflection, is entirely useless. From the dispositions of mankind to pay respect and submission to superior personal qualities, and still more to a superiority of rank and station, together with that propensity which every one feels to continue in those modes of action to which he has long been accustomed, the great body of the people, who have commonly neither leisure nor capacity to weigh the advantages of public regulations, are

prevented from indulging their unruly passions, and retained in subjection to the magistrate. The same dispositions contribute in some degree to restrain those rash and visionary projects, which proceed from the ambition of statesmen, or the wanton desire of innovation, and by which nations are exposed to the most dreadful calamities. Those feelings of the human mind, which give rise to authority, may be regarded as the wise provision of nature for supporting the order and government of society; and they are only to be regretted and censured, when, by exceeding their proper bounds, they no longer act in subordination to the good of mankind, but are made, as happens, indeed, very often, the instruments of tyranny and oppression.

ESSAY VIII.

The gradual Advancement of the Fine Arts—Their Influence upon Government.

THE diversions and amusements of any people are usually conformable to the progress they have made in the common arts of life. Barbarians, who are much employed in fighting, and are obliged to procure subsistence, as well as to defend their acquisitions, by vigorous corporeal exertions, amuse themselves with mock fights, and with such contentions as display their strength, agility, and courage. Long after mankind have made such advances in rearing cattle, and in agriculture, as to derive their principal maintenance from those arts, they continue to follow hunting and fishing, with all the varieties of rural sport, as their chief recreation and pastime. But when, in consequence of their improvement in useful arts, the bulk of a people are engaged in peaceable professions, and from

their advancement in opulence and civilization, have become averse from hazardous exertions, and desirous of repose and tranquillity, it may be expected that a suitable variation will take place in the style of their amusements. Instead of engaging in the athletic exercises, they will hire others to exhibit spectacles of that nature, and will become sedentary spectators of the struggle. Or if they have attained a higher degree of refinement, they will invent games which admit the display of mental address and ingenuity; and will at length introduce entertainments calculated to gratify the taste of whatever is beautiful in the compass of art or of nature. In some countries, no doubt, accidental circumstances have retarded the improvement of these elegant pleasures, and preserved, in the midst of opulence and civilization, an uncommon attachment to the primitive amusements of a rude age; The Romans, in consequence of early and deep impressions which they had received from their long and constant employment in war, were disgraced, even at the most exalted period of their philosophy and litera-

ture, by the fondness which they retained for the barbarous exhibitions of the amphitheatre. The inhabitants of this island, among whom the lower orders have considerable influence in directing the fashions, have incurred the ridicule of their neighbours, for their strong partiality to the inelegant amusements of the cock-pit, and the bear-garden. But whatever exceptions may occur in particular cases, it is commonly observed, that the refinements of taste, and the cultivation of the elegant arts, among a people, are in proportion to those improvements which multiply the comforts and conveniences of life, and give rise to extensive affluence and luxury.

That the degree of barbarism, or of refinement, in this particular, which happens to prevail in a country, must have a powerful effect upon the character and manners of the inhabitants, will be readily admitted, when we consider what a large proportion of time is frequently spent in amusements and diversions; what a multiplicity of ideas these are capable of suggesting; and what a deep impression they make, more especially

in the higher ranks, and in the early periods of life!

In examining, therefore, the improvements which have taken place, in this country, since the revolution, it would be improper to overlook that progressive culture of the fine arts which has been so conspicuous, and from which the inhabitants of the higher, and even middling ranks, derive so great a share of their amusement. Upon this subject, I shall throw together a few observations, concerning the history of these arts, and concerning their influence upon the government of a people; beginning with that extensive branch which is communicated by language, or literary composition. This may be divided into two classes: the first comprehending those compositions which are primarily calculated for mere entertainment, and to which, in a large sense, the denomination of *poetry* may be given: the second, including those in which entertainment is but a secondary object, and which may come under the general description of *eloquence*.

SECTION I.

Of Poetry; or those Compositions which are primarily calculated for mere Entertainment.

WE find that from the original constitution of our nature, we derive pleasure from the utterance of certain measured and modulated sounds; and are still more delighted when by the contrivance of language, these pleasing sounds are made to represent or convey the ideas or images of former sensations. These two sources of pleasure, the melody of sounds, and the agreeable representation of ideas or images by words, concur in singing, which, with the accompaniment of dancing, constitutes one of the great amusements of early nations.

A song contains the rudiments of poetry and music, two arts, which, in a state of extreme simplicity, are commonly united. But when the musician on the one hand has

invented a rich and varied melody, and the poet, on the other hand has acquired so much experience and knowledge as to introduce a long and intricate series of thoughts, it is no longer possible to enjoy at once the result of their different improvements, and it becomes necessary that the two arts should be separated. The consequence of that separation is the superior cultivation and improvement of each, with regard to all those effects which they are separately capable of producing. As music is thus gradually rendered more intricate, and of more difficult execution, the mechanical part of it requires a longer and more intense application for acquiring a proficiency in the performance, and surpassing more and more the patience and perseverance of the ordinary gentleman performer, is at length abandoned in a great measure to the mere artist, who follows that profession for hire; while poetry, of which the mechanism is more simple and easy, and in which the powers of imagination are less confined in the trammels of art, becomes not so much a professional object as the occasional exercise of all those persons to whom

inclination or genius happens to recommend that species of amusement.

The pleasure which poetry affords appears to arise primarily from the representation of those natural objects which are great, new, or unexpected, and which are fitted to excite admiration, wonder, and surprise. These emotions are produced in us, not only from the nature of the objects represented, but still more from the mode of representation; which through the surprising medium of language, by an operation like that of enchantment, conveys an exact and lively image of every possible existence.

That admiration, wonder, and surprise, are agreeable feelings, which in different shapes and directions, become the source of a delightful occupation to the mind, is consistent with universal experience. The impressions of admiration are the deepest and most violent. Those of wonder and surprise are slighter and more transient, but in return, they are more numerous and varied, more susceptible of different forms and modifications, and enter more intimately into

the ordinary train of our ideas and amusements.

The images communicated by the poet may relate either to external nature or to the passions and operations of the mind. The former are agreeable from the circumstances already suggested; but the latter afford a separate pleasure, which is frequently of much higher importance. When the passions and sentiments of our fellow-creatures correspond with our own, they excite that pleasing sympathy which is the great source of benevolence and friendship; when they are on the other hand, remarkably contrasted with our own feelings, they contribute, in some cases, to our entertainment, by provoking ridicule, and exciting the grateful sensation of laughter.

PART I.

Of Epic Poetry; *or what is related by the Poet in his own Person.*

THOUGH the imagery arising from views of external nature, is unavoidably blended with that which springs from the representation of human sentiment, they have given rise to two different forms of poetical composition, more peculiarly adapted to the one or the other, the epic and the dramatic. The former in which the incidents are constantly related by the poet himself, and are thus thrown into a sort of shade and distance, favourable to the exaggerating emotions of admiration, wonder, and surprise, is peculiarly suited to the description of external nature. The latter, in which events are not supposed to be communicated by the intervention of the poet, but to pass in the immediate presence of the spectator, is better calculated to produce that vivacity of colouring, and that visionary conception of

reality, without which it is impossible to awaken our sympathetic affections.

The sublime genius of epic poetry is peculiarly favoured by the manners of that rude and barbarous period which precedes the cultivation of the common arts of life. In proportion as men are ignorant and destitute of civilization, they are the more liable to be impressed with admiration, wonder, and surprise; and the more likely, though without skill or management, to communicate those feelings in their genuine simplicity and force. They are in a world where almost every thing is new and unaccountable, and where their observation is confined to a small number of objects. The great scenes of nature are spread before them, and successively recur in all the various forms which they assume in different seasons and situations. These, dwelling upon the imagination of the uninstructed beholder, and surveyed in a variety of aspects, present new and striking images of grandeur and terror, of contrast, and of resemblance, of unknown causes magnified and misconceived by fear,

or of strange and unexpected events misrepresented by delusive prepossession. At the approaching light of knowledge, these wonders disappear; the gigantic vanishes; and the multiplied pursuits of society render mankind acquainted with the new, familiar with the great, and conversant in the minute parts of nature. Poetic imagery of course changes its character, and losing its enthusiastic ardour, sinks gradually into the temper of cool thought and reflection.

In the oriental poetry of a remote period, which is handed down to us, we discover evident proofs of that peculiar style and manner, by which the poetry of a rude people appears to be distinguished. Great force of conception, with little taste or judgment in the distribution of parts: a few features, boldly delineated, without skill or perseverance to finish the picture: grand and sublime images, loosely combined, and often ill assorted: comparisnns far-fetched, but lofty and magnificent; with strong, but harsh metaphors, frequently broken and inconsistent; and with language highly figurative rather from a penury of

appropriated expression, than from exuberance of fancy, and therefore, in many casess hyperbolical and uncouth.

The same character of sublimity may be recognised in those relics of Celtic poetry, ascribed to Ossian; which no credulity can believe to be an entire forgery of the publisher; but from which we may easily suppose that he has removed a great part of their original imperfections.

That the sublime genius of Homer was greatly indebted to the character of the age in which he lived, will readily be admitted; but the difficulty lies in conceiving, by what means, in so rude an age, he could acquire that correctness of taste and judgment for which he is so conspicuous. What an astonishing phenomenon is the Iliad, if we survey the extensive and regular plan upon which it is composed, the skill and experience with which it is executed, together with the purity of expression, and the harmony of numbers, which every where prevail in that immortal work; and if, at the same time, we consider that the author must have lived before the return of the Heraclidæ into Peloponesus

otherwise he would undoubtedly have made some allusion to that event of so much importance to all Greece; that is, he must have lived within eighty years of the Trojan war, when the art of writing was hardly known to the Greeks, and more than three hundred years before their oldest prose-writer, of whom we have any accounts! How much more advanced was the state of arts and sciences in England during the life of Spenser, than in Greece during the period when Homer is understood to have lived; but how obsolete is the language of the former compared with that of the latter? If we consider the chronology of Homer's life to be sufficiently established, one would be tempted to believe that his rhapsodies, as they were called, have not only been arranged and digested in a subsequent period, as has been asserted upon good authority, but have even undergone something similar to the *rifacimento*, by Berni, of Boyardo's *Orlando*.

The improvement of poetry as an art, so far as it depends upon culture and experience, is naturally progressive; but when this art has attained a certain degree of perfec-

tion, like all others derived from the mere exercise of imagination, it is rendered stationary, after which it begins to decline, and hastens to its final extinction. While the impressions of the poet are weakened by the progress of knowledge, and by a familiar acquaintance with the objects of nature, his powers are, doubtless, in another view, increased by storing his mind with a greater number of ideas, by collecting and combining a greater diversity of images and events, and by the capacity he acquires of arranging and disposing them to the best advantage. The poetry of rude nations consists of separate lineaments, and of unconnected incidents; but from the natural advancement of the art, in a civilized and refined age, these disjointed members are united in a regular system, and produce a finished performance. The volume of nature is expanded; the range of imagination is enlarged; the discrimination of what is interesting and agreeable is improved; and by the union and co-operation of many beautiful parts, the mind is detained in a labyrinth of pleasing emotions. But in pro-

portion to the degree of excellence that has been attained, the standard of perfection is exalted; and the readers of poetry, tired with the repetition of similar objects and exhibitions, become severe and fastidious critics, quick and expert in discovering and censuring blemishes. Conscious, therefore, of what is expected, every succeeding candidate for fame must endeavour to surpass his predecessors by new images or combinations; by adorning each part with a greater accumulation of beauties, and by enriching the whole with a greater variety of parts. But there is a certain point beyond which the progress of embellishment ceases to be agreeable, and more is lost by deviation from simplicity than is gained by additional decoration. By crowding together a number, even of beautiful objects, the impression of each is diminished, the attention is dissipated in a multiplicity of particulars, and the general effect is proportionably impaired. By excessive ornament, the figures appear loaded with artificial trappings; and the piece becomes gaudy and inelegant. The more interesting and genuine appearances

of nature are, at the same time, exhausted; and it becomes necessary to substitute others of inferior value. The grand and the sublime are deserted in the pursuit of mere novelty and variety; and a corrupted taste becomes more habituated to factitious and sophisticated embellishments. Despairing to rival the models of a former period, the followers of the muses are at length induced to abandon the higher flights of imagination, and steering, without hazard, in a level and equable course, are content with the humbler attainments of smooth versification, and pointed expression; with figurative language, carefully collected from every quarter; in a word, with prosaic tameness and languor, arrayed according to the fashion of the times, in a pompous artificial diction. In this declining state of poetry, it becomes a natural improvement, to throw aside the mechanism of verse, and in more natural and easy expression, to exhibit such pictures of human life and manners as are calculated to please the understanding, and to interest the passions. Compositions of this nature, which, considering that their

chief object is mere entertainment, may be called poetical, are capable of being extended and diversified without end; and they seem peculiarly adapted to that combined exercise of the imagination and judgment which is agreeable to a refined and philosophical age.

These observations are confirmed by the history of all those nations who have made progress in the arts, and in polite literature. The sublimity of the poetical genius among the early Greeks, not only in what is commonly called epic poetry, but in the serious compositions intended for the accompaniment of music, has been universally acknowledged; and its decline in the later periods, after it had risen to a high degree of eminence, is not less conspicuous.

When the poetical talent, from despair of equalling the models already exhibited, and from the corruption of taste produced by the incessant study of novelty and variety, has been extinguished in one country, it is not likely, ever after, to revive among the same people; but it may easily be introduced into another country, where the

same natural beauties, not yet faded by time, are still fresh and agreeable; and where those images and descriptions, which had become tiresome by repetition, assume, when imitated in a different language, a new and interesting appearance, and may even acquire, in some degree, an air of originality. Thus the Roman poets, towards the end of the commonwealth, and about the beginning of the despotism, rose to high reputation by a judicious imitation of the Greek writers; though, in the latter period, the career of Roman poetry was very similar to that of the Grecian; with this difference, that, as the Roman government lasted longer, it afforded more time to mark the steps of descending genius, and those affectations which the growing corruption of taste had a tendency to produce.

When the nations of modern Europe, after a long interval of desolation and disorder, had begun to enjoy peace and tranquillity, and acquired some degree of opulence, they applied themselves to the arts of entertainment, and imitated with success the poetical compositions of the

Greeks and Romans. Their attempts of this nature were, however, peculiarly modified by two circumstances.

In imitating the Greek and Roman writers, they at first preferred the affected brilliancy, and tinsel ornaments of a later age, to the simple and genuine beauties of the preceding period. Though, in the infancy of the fine arts, mankind, as has been remarked by Mr. Hume, when left without direction or instruction, will commonly follow the dictates of nature and truth; and, in their compositions, will endeavour to express their thoughts with plainness and simplicity; yet they are easily misled by false guides, and have too little experience and taste to reject the gaudy and affected embellishments of a vitiated style. From this injudicious imitation of ancient models, the first poetical compositions of modern Italy, and of other European countries, exhibited all those defects which are usual in a declining state of the fine arts. The tendency, however, of subsequent improvements was not only to produce that correctness which is derived from observa-

tion, and from rules of criticism, but to restore that simplicity which is commonly the peculiar character of early compositions.

The Gothic manners, on the other hand, by introducing such romantic love, and such exalted notions of military honour, as were unknown to the Greeks and Romans, afforded a new and rich field for the display of heroic sentiments, and of striking adventures. The admiration and gallantry of which, in the age of chivalry, the ladies were uniformly the objects, and the humanity and generosity, with which all those gentlemen, who had acquired distinction in arms, thought it incumbent on them to behave towards one another, furnish a remarkable contrast with the spirit and behaviour of the principal personages in the Iliad; where a country is praised, in the same breath, for producing fine horses and beautiful women; and where Hector, who first runs away from Achilles, is afterwards dragged at the chariot wheels of that brutal conqueror. The advantages, however, derived from this modern refinement, were so counteracted by the false taste which pre-

vailed, as to render the poetical compositions, which appeared upon the revival of letters, a set of motley performances, not less disgraced by childish and extravagant conceits, than they were often distinguished by uncommon strength of imagery, and wildness of imagination. The Italian poets, who set the example to all Europe, were most remarkable both for the beauties and the defects which have been mentioned; though, in the course of near two centuries, when they continued to flourish, they seem to have availed themselves more and more of an acquaintance with the purer classics of Greece and Rome. The French, who, after the states of Italy, came next into the situation of a polished people, appear to have turned their chief attention to supply the defect which was most wanting in the Italian poets, by substituting order, method, and regularity; and, as every new attempt is commonly pushed to extremes, the exuberance of imagination in the latter gave rise, in the former, to excessive restraints, to a rigid observance of critical rules, and to feeble and languid compositions. In Eng-

land, the progress of civilization was much later than in France; and as the people, for this reason, advanced more slowly in their ideas of correctness, the poets did not abandon the Italian models until, by the force of custom, and by the practice of several eminent writers, the national taste was invariably fixed and determined. The irregularity and bold imagery of Spenser, and the sublime genius of Milton, not to mention our great writer in the dramatic walk, who has no pretensions to correctness, have given a peculiar bias to the poetical taste of Englishmen, and directed their admiration almost exclusively to the powers of invention and fancy.

In all these European countries however, it should seem, that the poetic spirit has greatly declined, and that in two of them it is almost extinct. In Italy, the Gierusalemmé Liberata may be accounted the last great exertion of the epic muse. In France, the Henriade of Voltaire, which is, in that country, the most considerable poem of the same class, appears, notwithstanding the

celebrity of its author, to have sunk into the shade.

That in England too, epic poetry is already long past its summit, and has been declining for more than half a century, will, from the slightest examination, appear abundantly evident. The late adventurers in this field discover, indeed, few marks of a corrupted taste; but they seem greatly inferior to their predecessors, in original genius, in fertility of invention, and in richness of imagery. They are a sort of minor poets, destitute of that creative power which enlivens every object, and without effort converts all nature to their purposes; but straining to be sublime, tiring their fancy by endless and rapid excursions to the most remote and opposite corners of the universe, painfully collecting and skilfully appropriating the labours of preceding authors, and after all producing, at best, a few fragments of beautiful passages.

In reality, considering the state of society at present, both in France and England, it may be doubted, whether an epic poem, of great length, and highly finished in all its

parts, embellished with the harmony of versification, and the splendour of diction, and enriched with metaphors and figures of all sorts, be an entertainment suited to the general taste of the people. It should seem, that a short composition of this nature may give a delightful exercise to the imagination; but that a long work becomes tedious, and demands from the reader an alertness, and intensity of application, which few persons are capable of maintaining. We find, accordingly, that the modern novels, which, in a plainer style, comprehend a wider field of adventures, have now, in great measure, superseded the ancient modes of epic poetry, and become the chief amusement of almost all those individuals who are exempted from bodily labour. The multiplication of these compositions, which were scarcely known to the Greeks and Romans, and the endless diversity of shapes, whether serious or comic, in which they have appeared, may be regarded as one of the great varieties in the history of polite literature.

PART II.

Of Dramatic Poetry.

DRAMATIC performances are, in all countries, of a later origin than epic. It is a more natural and obvious thought, that one should express his own ideas and sentiments, than that, by means of actors, or representatives, he should endeavour to communicate the ideas and sentiments of others. The latter supposes two very difficult, and, in some degree, inconsistent operations: First, that, by the warmth of sympathetic emotion, a man should enter so completely into the mind of others, as to conceive in what manner they will be affected on any particular occasion; and, in the second place, that he should distinguish and discriminate so nicely their peculiar feelings and affections, as never to confound them with his own. The exhibition of dramatic representations is, at the same time, attended with an expence, which may suit the cir-

cumstances of an opulent nation, but in which a rude people have neither the inclination nor the capacity to indulge.

This observation is confirmed both by the ancient and modern history of the drama. Sophocles and Euripides, among the Greeks, as well as Menander, and the other writers of the new comedy, flourished at the time of the highest Athenian opulence and politeness. The Romans, indeed, in a ruder age, appear to have made considerable exertions in comedy; but they were little more than mere translators from the Greeks, and imported those foreign productions when the state of Rome did not permit the rearing of them at home. The Roman taste began to degenerate before there was leisure for much material improvement in theatrical representations. This was likewise the fate of modern Italy. In France, the flourishing state of the theatre was not prior to the age of Lewis XIV.; nor in England to that of William III.

With respect to *tragedy* in particular, of which the great object is to excite compassion, by a display of the natural feelings of

distress, we may remark, that its improvement has been chiefly retarded from the difficulty of separating the ideas and sentiments proper to the persons introduced, from those of the poet himself. To that source we may trace the most conspicuous blemishes which are discernible in this kind of composition.

In a dramatic representation, though the incidents are in reality intended to pass before a set of spectators, they are supposed to be carried on without any witnesses. But this fundamental supposition the poet is frequently tempted to overlook, by making the persons of the drama explain to the audience those parts of the plot which he finds himself unable otherwise to communicate. This indirect address to the spectators is to be met with, less or more, in the best tragedies of every country; but, in the infancy of the drama, a great part of the plot is unfolded in that manner. In the fragments of a Chinese tragedy, published by Du Halde, every person informs the spectators who he is, what he has done, and what he intends to do. In the tragedies

of Euripides, the author generally supersedes the necessity of this, by employing some deity, or intelligent person, at the outset of the performance, to give the audience a full account of whatever is to happen. As, in the regular compositions of modern Europe, this clumsy contrivance is totally rejected; the information of this nature which they sometimes contain, appears to escape the writer from mere inadvertence, and from his confounding, in some measure, his own situation and views with those of the persons whom he exhibits.

From a similar inadvertence, we may account for those formal and set speeches, of unnatural, and apparently measured length, which abound in our most correct tragedies. In the conduct of his plot, the poet has occasion to introduce a certain train of ideas and sentiments, but, losing sight of the characters to whom they should be appropriated, he becomes himself the speaker, and endeavouring to do full justice to his friends, is anxious that they should omit no topic which the occasion may suggest. Hence, instead of the natural

turns of conversation, with such various and sudden reciprocations of dialogue, as frequently occur in real life, the piece is loaded with verbose and tedious harangues, resembling the declamatory pleadings of hireling orators. It is wonderful, how universally this unnatural style has become prevalent both in France and England, and how much the influence of custom has prevented even the most fastidious critics from being disgusted with it.

These defects are so gross and palpable, that they might easily be avoided; but there is another, derived from the same source, where the difficulty appears much greater. The person who is violently affected by any particular event, is apt to feel and act very differently from another who is merely a witness of his situation and emotions; and the passions excited in the former may not only be dissimilar, but often perfectly repugnant, to those which are produced in the latter. Thus, he who is under the dominion of anger, or of resentment, gives way to the boisterous expression of those passions, while the specators may be affected

with apprehension or disgust; and he who is instigated, by avarice or ambition, to commit an act of injustice, is probably buoyed up with the immediate prospect of gratifying his desires, and disposed to palliate or justify the measure; while those who behold the commission of the crime, are likely to feel indignation, hatred, or contempt. When a poet, therefore, endeavours to represent the behaviour of his dramatic personages, he must, by an effort of imagination, enter, as it were, into their situation, in order to conceive the feelings that are suited to their character and circumstances. It is extremely difficult, however, to remain in this artificial station, and steadily to retain that view of things which it is calculated to present. His own situation incessantly obtrudes itself upon him, and shifting the visionary scene, disposes him to regard the several incidents through the medium of a by-stander. Thus the persons exhibited in tragedy, instead of expressing the passions natural to their situation, are made to describe those passions, to explain their various appearances, to

point out the movements which they have a tendency to produce, to moralize upon their consequences; in a word, to become a sort of spectators of their own conduct.

The imperfections and blemishes in this respect, which occur in the best dramatic performances, are innumerable. Few poets appear to have conceived the idea of avoiding them; but the immortal Shakespear, from the mere force of his genius, has done so more successfully than any other writer, ancient or modern; and it is this circumstance alone, which, in the midst of a thousand irregularities and defects, forms the great superiority of his dramas.

To the difficulties which are unavoidable in dramatical compositions, there was added, in modern Europe, another, from those forms of versification which fashion had introduced and established. The melody arising from the recurrence of similar sounds, with which modern ears were peculiarly delighted, gave birth, first of all, to the *stanza*, which became fashionable in Italy, and in those other European nations which made any progress in the fine arts. But

the intricacy of this measure was found so inconsistent with the form of dialogue required in dramatic writings, that in these it was abandoned, and gave place to a more manageable kind of verse, by the regular adoption of couplet-rhymes. Even this versification, however, according to the mode which it assumed, more especially in France, with a pause constantly in the middle of each line, with alternate male and female couplets, and with the indispensable requisite, that every speaker shall finish the verse left incomplete by his predecessor, proved a considerable incumbrance to the poet, and, by demanding so much attention to the mere form of expression, exhausted, in some degree, that vigour which ought to be employed in the more important parts of the composition. To write good verses came thus to be held a distinct species of excellence, capable of compensating, in many cases, and even concealing the poverty of the matter contained in them; and an artificial diction, like the gait of a man walking upon stilts, was preferred to the

plain easy movements of a more natural expression.

The English, among whom a critical taste in poetry advanced more slowly than in France, and who began to study the art at a period when old prejudices were more dissipated by the light of knowledge, were less attached to the Gothic beauty of rhyme; and in tragedy, as well as in other kinds of poetical composition, were led to indulge themselves in a species of verse which admitted greater freedom and variety. The fortunate example of an Italian writer, which, in a short time, found a successful imitator in England, delivered the dramatic poets of this country from the fetters of the rhyming couplet, and introduced the measure of blank verse, which is at once capable of approaching the looseness and facility of prose, and of being adapted to the most exalted and heroic sentiments. The consequences were such as might be expected; and if the English writers of tragedy have been commonly more happy than their neighbours upon the Continent, in delineating the simple and genuine feelings of the

human heart, it may be attributed more to the convenient mode of their versification than to any other circumstance.

Their merit in this respect has also taught their countrymen to distinguish and to admire this particular excellence, and to undervalue any other where this is wanting. It should seem, therefore, that in this instance, the standard of taste, in France and in Britain, has become remarkably different; and to those who adopt the one or the other, it appears equally inconceivable that the merit of Racine and of Shakespear should admit of a comparison. Voltaire observes, that the question is decided by the other countries of Europe, who may be considered as impartial, and who unanimously give the preference to Racine. But French literature is better understood through the greater part of Europe, and is more fashionable than English. Besides, a foreigner is better qualified to judge of merit in the conduct of the plot, in which the superiority of the French writers is admitted, than with regard to the natural expression of sentiment and passion, which constitutes the peculiar excellence of

the English. Thus the Italians are said to look upon the *Orlando Furioso* as their greatest epic poem, while foreigners generally prefer the *Gierusalemmé Liberata;* because the merit of the former, which consists in richness and variety of poetical imagery, none but a native of Italy can completely feel; but the regularity and good conduct of the fable, which forms the chief recommendation of the latter, is perceived by every smatterer in the language. It was perhaps, for a similar reason, that Euripides was the favourite writer of tragedy among the Greeks themselves, and that Sophocles is more commonly admired by the moderns.

Among the other differences between epic and dramatical compositions, we may remark, that the latter, being the subject of public spectacles, in which mankind become highly interested, are easily modified into a variety of shapes, to suit the prevailing inclination; and consequently, they are less liable, by length of time, or frequent repetition, to be exhausted, or to lose their attractions. Of this a striking instance occurred not long since in France; where, though the general

style of tragedy had been long settled by custom, an entirely new species of drama, under the name of the *weeping comedy**, has been introduced; as in *Cenie*, Le Pere de Famille, Le Philosophe sans le sçavoir, and the dramatic works of Mercier. In these compositions, by laying aside altogether the restraints of versification, together with all pomp of imagery or of expression, and by founding the plot, not upon the misfortunes peculiar to princes and heroes, but upon such domestic afflictions and calamities as are incident to the greater part of mankind, there is opened a direct avenue to the heart, equally inviting and attractive to every spectator. By this improvement, tragedy being stript of all foreign ornaments, and exhibiting a more simple and genuine picture of nature, is likely to excite more powerfully the movements of pity and sympathy, and consequently to attain more completely her proper object.

Some attempts of the same nature have of late been made successfully in England,

* Comedie Larmoyante.

though in this country they are not so absolutely necessary, as the old models, in that species of composition had deviated less from the true standard. But in Germany, where the drama has hitherto made but small advances, and where the writers of this class are therefore less hampered by former habits and prejudices, the late examples of a new composition in France have produced a general imitation, and have had suitable influence in forming the national taste.

The end of comedy, properly so called, is to excite laughter; an emotion arising from a contrast in the mind between certain objects of an opposite description. Grand, solemn, or important objects are beheld with admiration, and with respect, or at least with serious attention. Mean, light, or trivial objects appear contemptible, insignificant, or frivolous. The ideas and sentiments, therefore, which arise from these two sources are so totally inconsistent and repugnant, that they cannot be blended together in our thoughts; and even when they are forced upon us in succession, we find a difficulty in passing very quickly from the one to the

other. The respective impressions appear to contend for the preference; and while they rouse our attention to alternate and opposite views, we are conscious of an effort or struggle, which occasions the pleasant, but somewhat uneasy convulsion of laughter.

To produce this emotion, therefore, a sudden contrast of dignity and meanness is always necessary. But it makes no difference, whether this contrast occur in the several parts of an idea presented to us, or from comparing what is presented, with something suggested by the previous train of our own thoughts. Provided there be a sudden transition from the one sort of impression to the other, the manner in which it is produced is of no consequence. Even in the ordinary course of our thoughts, the sudden occurrence of a light and trivial incident will frequently excite mirth. The mind passes readily, by a natural spring, from grave and solemn occupations, to the utmost levity and frivolity; but the transition in the opposite direction is more slow and difficult. The most insignificant avocation at church will sometimes discompose our gravity, and

mar our devotions by an ill-timed jocularity; but in our idle amusements, and in a playful humour, we are seldom provoked to laughter by the intrusion of an important and wise reflection*.

From the immense number of ideas, of different sorts, which pass through the mind, and frequently in rapid succession, there cannot fail to arise numerous instances of that contrast which tends to mirth and pleasantry. These are varied without end in the degree of their intensity, from such as produce the most violent horse-laugh, to such as awaken a mere smile that is hardly perceptible, and which may be considered as expressing little more than the simple feeling of pleasure, a feeling, however, which is light and volatile, in contra-distinction to what is important and solemn.

—"Olli subridens pater hominumque deumque."
——"As Jupiter on Juno smiles,
When he impregns the clouds."

* See Akenside's Pleasures of Imagination. Note on Book III.

It may not be unworthy of remark, that, as the pleasurable convulsion of laughter arises not only from the influence of certain mental emotions, but also from the mechanical operations of corporeal objects, it is attended, in this latter case, with circumstances a good deal analogous to those which take place in the former. When, by the rubbing of certain irritable parts of the body, we become no longer able to suppress the risible agitation, we are sensible of a conflict between opposite sensations, resembling what arises from a contrast of ideas or sentiments; and are with difficulty able to resist the attacks of pleasure and pain, which appear alternately to obtain the superiority.

Of all the examples of contrast which are conducive to laughter, the richest and most extensive is, that which appears in the character and manners of men. As nothing is more constantly the object of attention than the behaviour of our fellow-creatures, there is no subject which more frequently employs our judgment, and awakens our feelings. When their behaviour is consistent with

propriety, it excites approbation and esteem, and is always attended with the appearance of dignity in the person in whom it is displayed. As every man wishes to be esteemed by others, he endeavours on all occasions, to exhibit such a view of himself as will tend to that purpose. This we know, from experience, to be the general aim of mankind; and according to this standard we examine the behaviour of each individual. When it happens, therefore, that the conduct of our fellow-creatures, instead of exhibiting that propriety which we look for, and which we suppose to be intended, is foolish, absurd and despicable, and when this conduct is presented to our view in a manner so unexpected as to excite surprise; it affords a strong and sudden contrast of dignity and meanness, and becomes the natural object of scorn and ridicule.

It is unnecessary to add, that such improprieties of conduct as fall under the denomination of *crimes*, or *great vices*, are not properly ridiculous; as they do not excite contempt but indignation and resentment;

feelings which have no resemblance to such as are produced by mean or trivial objects.

The talent of exciting laughter, by the exhibition of any impropriety or absurdity in human character and conduct, seems to be what is properly called *humour*; as *wit* seems to be the talent of exciting mirth by any contrast which has no dependence on the behaviour of mankind.

Considering humour and wit as distinguished in this manner, it must be evident that the former has a much greater tendency than the latter, to excite hearty and violent laughter; and constitutes, for that reason, the chief province of comedy. The ideas of dignity, which we not only refer to every rational creature, but which we see that he still more strongly refers to himself, render us peculiarly sharp-sighted in marking every instance of absurdity, weakness, or impropriety of which he is guilty, and dispose us to exaggerate those imperfections, from the secret gratification which our vanity obtains by diminishing the rank and consequence of others. Human nature is a great laughing-

stock, which we are pleased to see tossed about, and turned in all shapes, and with whose ridiculous appearance we are never tired. The pleasure we derive from the ludicrous combinations of other objects is more slight and transitory. The flashes of wit excite commonly no more than a smile, and are not so much the objects of mirth, as of admiration and surprise.

From what has been observed, it should seem, that, though comic writing cannot be successfully cultivated until the liberal arts and sciences have, in general, made considerable progress, it is likely to attain its highest improvement, at a period which precedes the most refined and correct state of taste and literature.

Among simple and ignorant people, it is not difficult to provoke laughter, because they have too little experience and reflection to distinguish what has real dignity or meanness from what may assume the appearance of either; and because they are so little acquainted with the various connections of objects, that any assemblage, in the least out of the common road, is apt to surprise them.

"The simple joke that takes the shepherd's heart,
"Easily pleased, the long loud laugh sincere."
THOMSON.

According as men acquire comprehensive and liberal views of things, they become fastidious and sparing of their merriment. They are more discriminating in regard to the objects which afford the necessary contrast, and they are more capable of preconceiving those occasions and situations which give rise to it. A man is never much tickled with a story which he has heard before, and which he distinctly remembers; and upon the same principle he is not apt to laugh heartily at those pleasantries which depend upon associations already familiar to him, or which have a great similarity to those which he has foreseen or imagined.

In Turkey, and in some other eastern countries, the contrast between a tall and short man is thought to be a reasonable cause of laughter; and a dwarf is, therefore, a necessary appendage in the retinue of princes.

False and inconsistent reasonings which have an air of speciousness, bulls and blunders of expression, even errors of pronun-

ciation, or improprieties of dress unperceived by the wearer, are sources of mirth and jocularity in all countries.

Among our forefathers in Europe, the behaviour of a mere idiot was viewed in a similar light; and a person in those unfortunate circumstances was commonly kept by men of wealth, as an object of ridicule. When people became too polite to laugh at a real idiot, they substituted in his place an artificial one with a motley coat, and with a cap and bells, to imitate the behaviour of a simpleton, but with occasional strokes of shrewdness and sagacity. This personage afforded entertainment, by appearing, according to the proverb, more knave than fool; and became at last a professed jester, upon whom the family in which he lived, and their guests, were accustomed to exercise their talents; but who, at the same time, like the clown of a pantomime, could shew by his occasional sallies, that he was himself no mean performer in the scene.

Persons of education, however, becoming gradually more expert in this kind of diversion, began to undervalue the studied jokes

of these pretended fools, and endeavoured to improve the entertainment by jesting with one another, and by assuming upon occason any sort of character which might contribute to the mirth of the company. The practice of *masquerading*, which came to be universal through a great part of Europe, arose from this prevailing disposition, and gave individuals a better opportunity of exercising their talents, by enabling them to use more freedom with each other, and to appear unexpectedly in a variety of situations. Such was the style of amusement, which having prevailed in that period of European manners described by Shakespear, makes a conspicuous figure in the comic works of that author. As fashion is apt to produce fantastical imitation, it appears that the folly of individuals led them, in those times, to assume or counterfeit those humours in real life; an affectation which had become so general as to fall under the notice of the stage, and to produce a ridicule of the *cheating* humour, the *bragging* humour, the *melancholy* humour, the *quarelling* humour, exhibited by Shakespear and John-

son, in the characters of Nym, of Pistol, of Master Stephen, of Master Matthew, and the Angry Boy.

The higher advances of civilization and refinement contributed, not only to explode these ludicrous pastimes which had been the delight of a former age, but even to weaken the propensity to every species of humorous exhibition. Although humour be commonly productive of more merriment than wit, it seldom procures to its possessor the same degree of respect. To shew in a strong light the follies, the defects, and the improprieties of mankind, they must be exhibited with peculiar colouring. To excite strong ridicule, the picture must be charged; and the features, though like, must be exaggerated. The man who in conversation, aims at the display of this talent, must endeavour to represent with peculiar heightening the tone, the aspect, the gesture, the deportment of the person whom he ridicules. To paint folly, he must for the time appear foolish. To exhibit oddity and absurdity, he must himself become odd and absurd. There is, in this attempt, something low and buf-

foonish; and a degree of that meanness which appeared in the person thus exposed, is likely, by a natural association, to remain with his representative. The latter is beheld in the light of a player, who degrades himself for our entertainment, and whom nothing but the highest excellence in his profession can save from our contempt.

But though the circumstances and manners of a polished nation are adverse to the cultivation of humour, they are peculiarly calculated to promote the circulation and improvement of wit. The entertainment arising from the latter has no connection with those humiliating circumstances which are inseparable from the former; but is derived from such occasional exertions of the fancy as may be consistent with the utmost elegance and correctness. The man of wit has no occasion to personate folly, or to become the temporary butt of that ridicule which he means to excite. He assumes no grotesque attitude; he employs no buffoonish expression; nor appears in any character but his own. Unlike the man of humour, he is never prolix or tedious, but

passing with rapidity from one object to another, selects from the group whatever suits his purpose. He sees with quickness those happy asemblages, those unexpected oppositions and resemblances with which the imagination is delighted and surprised; and by a sudden glance, he directs the attention to that electrical point of contact by which the enlivening stroke is communicated.

Persons in the higher sphere of life, who are exempted from manual labour, and spend a great part of their time in meetings of pleasure and amusement, are captivated by the brilliancy of this talent, and become fond of displaying it. By reciprocal efforts to entertain one another, and by hazarding the free exercise of their mental powers, their understandings are sharpened, their knowledge is extended, the range of their fancy is enlarged, their conceptions become clear and lively, and they acquire a facility and command of expression. As their minds are thus filled with a greater store of ideas and sentiments, and as their habits of communication are improved in proportion; their conversation is, of course, enriched and

diversified; it assumes a higher tone of sprightliness and vivacity, and is more productive of those new and uncommon turns of thought which are the sources of wit and pleasantry.

While true comedy, therefore, which is conversant in theatrical representation, and which is possessed of the higher powers of ridicule, experiences the discouraging influence of refined and elegant manners, it is apt, in most countries, to be succeeded by a kindred species of composition, more airy and volatile, but less forcible; which is equally calculated to exhibit the mere playfulness of a sportive imagination, and to become the pointed instrument of satire and invective.

It may, however, be remarked that the display of comic humour, in any country, will depend very much on the varieties which occur in the characters of the inhabitants. According to the diversity which prevails in the real characters of mankind, more numerous instances of impropriety and adsurdity will arise, and a wider field of ridicule will be presented to those who have the capacity to make use of it.

One of the chief causes of this diversity is the advancement of commerce and manufactures, and the consequent separation and multiplication of trades and professions. In commercial and manufacturing countries, all the active and industrious part of the inhabitants, that is, the great body of the people, are divided and subdivided, by an endless variety of occupations, which produce corresponding differences, in their education and habits, in their sentiments and opinions, and even in the configuration of their bodies as well as in the temper and disposition of their minds.

It also merits attention, that the same varieties in character and situation, which furnish the materials of humour and ridicule, dispose mankind to employ them for the purpose of exciting mirth. The standard of dignity and propriety is different according to the character of the man who holds it, and is therefore contrasted with different improprieties and foibles. Every person, though he may not be so conceited as to consider himself in the light of a perfect model,

is yet apt to be diverted with the apparent oddity of that behaviour which is very different from his own. Men of robust professions, the smith, the mason, and the carpenter, are apt to break their jests upon the weakness and effiminacy of the barber, the weaver, or the tailor. The poet, or the philosopher in his garret, condemns the patient industry, and the sordid pursuits of the merchant. The silent, mysterious practitioner in physic, is apt to smile at the no less formal but clamorous ostentation of the barrister. The genteel military man, who is hired, at the nod of his superior, to drive his fellow-creatures out of this world, is ready to sneer at the zeal, and starch-deportment of the Divine, whose profession leads him to provide for their condition and enjoyments in the next. The peculiarities of each individual are thus beheld through a mirror, which magnifies their ludicrous features, and by continually exciting that "itching to deride," of which all mankind are possessed, affords constant exercise to their humorous talents.

Rude and barbarous nations are placed in opposite circumstances. They have no such division of labour as gives rise to separate employments and professions, but are engaged, promiscuously and successively, in all those kinds of work with which they are acquainted. Having all, therefore, the same pursuits and occupations, and consequently the same objects of attention, they undergo a similar education and discipline, and acquire similar habits and ways of thinking. From the accounts of travellers and historians, we accordingly find, that however such people may happen to be distinguished by singular institutions and whimsical customs, they discover a wonderful uniformity in the general outline of their character and manners; an uniformity no less remarkable in different nations the most remote from each other, than in the different indiduals of the same tribe or nation. As barbarians and savages have, at the same time, little opportunity for cultivating the powers of imagination, they are apt to be no less destitute of the inclination, than of the materials, for the exercise of humour. They

have, it is said, no turn for mirth and pleasantry. Their aspect is gloomy and severe. Their complexion, adust, and melancholy.

From the different circumstances attending the cultivation of the arts in different countries, we may discover, in the article now under consideration, some varieties that seem worthy of notice. Among the ancient Greek states, the advancement of commerce and manufactures was, doubtless, much inferior to that which, during the present century, has taken place in modern Europe. But even so far as it went, its effects, in occasioning a diversity of characters among the people, were limited by the institution of domestic slavery, which was pushed to a great extent. The character of a slave, whatever be the employment in which he is engaged, must always be affected by his degrading situation, and by the arbitrary treatment to which he is exposed. "The world is not his friend, nor the world's law." It is no wonder that he should endeavour to elude those rules of justice, which appear to be established for the advantage merely of the free people, and from the benefit of

which he is totally excluded. It is no wonder that he should study to over-reach an unfeeling master, by whom he is regarded as no better than a brute animal, and denied the common rights and privileges of humanity; or that he should boil with indignation and resentment at those injuries to which he is continually subjected, and, when restrained by fear from expressing a sense of his wrongs, should be disposed to treasure up vengeance against his cruel oppressors. The greater part of slaves, therefore, are unable to resist the powerful contagion of the vices which are engendered in their miserable and humiliating circumstances; and the entire destruction of their morals is not the least injury of which they have reason to complain. In all ages and countries they discover nearly the same temper and dispositions—jealous, vindictive, and cruel; weak, fickle, and pusillanimous; cunning, selfish, and dishonest.

As in the most commercial of the Greek states, almost all the departments of trade and manufactures, and even many of those

which in modern times are accounted liberal, were filled with slaves, the uniformity of character so prevalent in that class of men, was, in a great measure, extended to the whole body of the people, and produced a proportional deficiency of those objects which afford the chief materials, as well as the chief excitements of humour and ridicule. This was probably the reason why the Athenians, notwithstanding their eminence in all the other productions of genius, discover so remarkable a deficiency in comic or ludicrous compositions. The comedies of Aristophanes, written at a period when the nation had attained a high pitch of civilization, are mere farces, deriving the whole of their pleasantry, not from nicely discriminated and well-supported characters, but from the droll and extravagant situations in which the persons of the drama are exhibited. It is true that the style of what is called the *new comedy*, is said to have been very different; but of this we can form no judgment, unless from the translations or imitations of it by Plautus and Terence;

from which the originals, in the article which we are now considering, do not appear in a very favourable light.

The comedies of those two Roman writers are also very deficient in the representation of character. An old avaricious father, a dissolute extravagant son, a flattering parasite, a bragging cowardly soldier, a cunning intriguing rascal of a slave; these, with a few trifling variations, make the *dramatis personæ* in all the different compositions of those authors. But though neither Plautus nor Terence appear to have much merit in describing those nice combinations of affectation and folly, which may be regarded as the foundation of true comedy, they seem happy in the expression of common feelings, and in exhibiting natural pictures of ordinary life.

The Romans, independent of their close imitation of the Greeks, had scarce any comic writing of their own. After the destruction of the commonwealth, we meet with few writers in this department; and none of any eminence. The age of elegant literature at Rome was very short: there

was no commerce: the number of slaves was immense, as no free citizen would engage in any profession but those of the camp or the bar; and therefore it is probable that the Romans were still more deficient, than the Greeks, in that variety of original characters which is the great spur to ridicule.

In modern Italy, the rise of mercantile towns was followed by the revival of letters, and by the introduction of ludicrous and somewhat licentious compositions; but the Italians lost their trade, and their literature began to decline, before it had risen to that height at which the improvement of comedy was to be expected. They displayed, however, in a sort of pantomimic entertainments, a vein of low humour, by grotesque exhibitions, which are supposed to characterize the citizens of different states; and in this inferior species of drama, they are said to possess irresistible powers of exciting laughter.

In France, the country which, after Italy made the first advances in civilization, the state of society has never been very favourable to humorous representation. In

that country, fashion has had more influence, than in any other part of Europe to suppress the oddities and eccentricities of individuals. The gentry, by their frequent intercourse, are induced to model their behaviour according to a common standard; and the lower orders think it incumbent upon them to imitate the gentry. Thus a great degree of uniformity of character and behaviour is propagated through all ranks, from the highest to the lowest; and a French beggar is a gentleman in rags. Individuals, at this rate, have little temptation to laugh at each other; for this would be nearly the same thing as to laugh at themselves. From refinement of manners, at the same time, their attention has been directed to elegant sallies of pleasantry, more than to ludicrous and buffoonish representation; and the nation has at length come to occupy the superior regions of wit, without passing through the thicker and more vulgar medium of humour.

It may, accordingly, be remarked, that among the numerous and distinguished men

of genius whom France has produced, Le Sage, and Moliere, are perhaps the only examples that can be adduced of eminent humorous writers. The high and deserved reputation of the latter, as a writer of comedy, is universally admitted; though I think it can hardly be denied, that his characters are commonly overcharged and farcical.

There is, perhaps, no country in which manufactures and commerce have been so far extended as in England, or consequently in which the inhabitants have displayed such a multiplicity and diversity of characters. What is called a *humourist*, that is, a person who exhibits particular whims and oddities, not for the sake of producing mirth, but to gratify his own inclination, is less known in any other country. The English are regarded by their neighbours as a nation of humourists; a set of originals, moulded into singular shapes, and as unlike the rest of mankind as each other.

Political reasoners have ascribed this wonderful diversity of character among the

English to the form of their government, which imposes few restraints upon their conduct. It is obvious, however, that, though an absolute government may prevent any great singularity of behaviour, a free constitution will not alone produce it. Men do not acquire an odd or whimsical character, because they are at liberty to do so, but because they have propensities which lead them to it. In the republican states of antiquity, which enjoyed more political freedom, and among mere savages, who are almost under no government at all, nothing of this remarkable eccentricity is to be observed.

But, whatever be the cause of that endless diversity of characters which prevails in England, it certainly gives encouragement to sarcastic mirth and drollery, and has produced a general disposition to humour and raillery, which is the more conspicuous from the natural modesty, reserve, and taciturnity of the people. To delineate the most unaccountable and strange appearances of human nature, they require not the aid of fiction; to conceive what is ridiculous,

they have only to observe it. Each individual, according to the expression of a famous buffoon, is not only humourous in himself, but the cause of humour in other men. The national genius, as might be expected, has been moulded and directed by these peculiar circumstances, and has produced a greater number of eminent writers, in all the branches of comic and ludicrous composition, than are to be found in any other country. To pass over the extraordinary genius of Shakespeare, in this as well as in other departments, with those other comic writers who lived about the commencement of English manufactures, and to mention only a few instances, near our own times; it will be difficult for any country, at one period, to match the severe and pointed irony of Swift; the lighter, but more laughable satire of Arbuthnot; the gentle raillery of Gay; the ludicrous and natural, though coarse, representations of low life, by Fielding; the strong delineations of character, together with the appropriate easy dialogue of Vanburgh; the rich vein of correct pleasantry, in ridiculing the va-

rieties of studied affectation, displayed by Congreve; and, above all, the universal, equable, and creative humour of Addison.

It cannot, however, escape observation, that the number of adventurers in this province, has of late been greatly diminished; and few of them have risen to eminence. With all the partiality which national prepossession can inspire, we are unable to name above one comic writer of the present day, who deserves to be mentioned along with his illustrious predecessors. Our late theatrical exhibitions, under the title of comedy, are, for the most part, either decent and regular, but cold and spiritless performances, or poor farces, interlarded with common place sentiment, and often accompanied by music, which creates a sort of interest with the greater part of an audience.

Whether this alteration is merely accidental, or proceeds from permanent causes; whether it is produced by the mere love of novelty, or by a general decline in the powers of exciting laughter, it is not easy to determine. That the present deficiency of talents may originate in permanent circum-

stances, depending upon gradual changes in the state of society, is far from being improbable. Though, in a country where trade and manufactures continue to flourish, the divisions of labour are endless, yet the new professions to which they give occasion come, at length, to be so minutely separated from each other, as to produce very little peculiarity of temper or disposition in those who exercise them. The person who rounds the head, and he who sharpens the point of a pin, though labouring in separate departments, present nothing different to the view of the comic observer. The field of humour and ridicule, therefore, ceases to increase; while, by constant employment, it may be worn out and exhausted.

On the other hand, it cannot be doubted, that the inhabitants of this island, though they have long retained the "vestigia ruris," are now, from an intercourse with their neighbours, and in the natural course of things, laying aside their former prejudices, and advancing with rapidity in all those refinements which contribute to the embellishment of society; and it may be expected

that when they attain a certain pitch of elegance and correctness of manners, they will become less desirous of figuring in the walks of humorous representation. Whether they are likely to become eminent in wit, in proportion as they decline in humour, may still be a question. There may be some reason to apprehend, that their application to serious business will preserve that saturnine complexion by which they have long been distinguished, and prevent their acquiring that quickness and flexibility of imagination, that never-failing vivacity and pleasantry, which are so conspicuous in their more volatile neighbours.

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THE END.

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J. G. Barnard, Printer, Skinner Street, London.


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Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 28 September, 2015